SERENA.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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AUTHOR OF THE ENGLISH NUN, &c.

"Truſt not man; he is by nature falſe,
"Diſſembling, ſubtle, cruel, and inconſtant."

OTWAY.

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SERENA.

CHAP. I.

" His honeſt ſoul was an unfolded book
" For all men to peruſe; his faithful tongue
" A rigid monitor to careleſs youth:
" Honour and glory were his darling theme;
" He ſcorn'd hypocriſy, and loath'd the man
" Who would betray his truſt, or wrong his friend."

LADY BURRELL.

WHILE the body enjoys health, and youthful hope is the inhabitant of the mind, years appear but as hours: the ſeaſons too ſwiftly in ſucceſſion return, though every

one is productive of new pleaſure. In ſuch a life ſo ſpent, in a ſtate of uninterrupted felicity, we take but little intereſt. It is over the miſeries of life that we love to linger; and (from what cauſe our philoſophers and moraliſts have not yet aſcertained) we find that mankind ſeem to take a ſtrange ſort of pleaſure in contemplating the misfortunes of their fellows.

It is perhaps from this very propenſity that we may obſerve that the exiled Nobleſſe of France have, ever ſince thoſe dreadful ſtate convulſions of their country rendered them fugitives in foreign lands, been more particularly ſubjects of notice and remark, than in the moſt proſperous day of that monarchial deſpotiſm which beſtowed and ſupported their conſequence. This intereſt has

has been particularly excited in England on more than one account, and has been extended in thoſe remote counties where a few years ago the inhabitants (as Mr. Barretti remarked) had no other idea concerning the natives of France than that they lived upon frogs, and were the natural enemies of old England!—And, to the everlaſting honour of Britiſh philanthropy, be it remembered, that wherever (through the realm) thoſe unfortunates have ſought a reſting-place, curioſity has only been indulged as a prelude to ſervices; and few, very few, have heard the enormities of their fellow-ſubjects mentioned as a national reproach.

Convinced that I can have no better auxiliary to aſſiſt me in the following pages, I ſhall invoke aid in the words of the moſt intereſting writer France has ever produced.

" Je me livre a toi, douce Melancholie : " veins, repandre ſur mes tableaux, ce demi " teinte ſombre, qui plait â tous les cœurs " ſenſibles ! Ne crains pas de les emouvoir : " les larmes que tu fais couler, ſont aux " ames tendres, ce que la roſée eſt aux " fleurs."—*De Florian.*

On the banks of the river Ribble, and at no great diſtance from the town of Skipton, in Yorkſhire, are extended the rich and beautifully diverſified domains of Somerſet Caſtle, the paternal manſion of Lord Somerſet, a Nobleman of the moſt amiable diſpoſition, and at the time this narrative commences, in rather the decline of life. Near four years a widower, he had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing female beauty and merit ſtill preſide at his table, and in his houſehold, in the

perſon

perſon of his only daughter, Miſs Delville (who was the perfect counterpart of her mother), and in his niece, Mrs. Powis, who had, ſince the death of her huſband, reſided entirely with her couſin, than whom ſhe was ſcarcely three years older. When his profeſſional duty, for young Delville (the only ſon of his Lordſhip) was in the Navy, permitted Piercy to join his family, the caſtle was the ſcene of domeſtic revelry and heartfelt content; and it was on ſuch occaſions only that Lord Somerſet ſeemed to forget that he had ever loſt a beloved and amiable wife.

Lord Somerſet had ſpent his early, and many of his maturer years, in the Army: but at the commencement of the American war,

had retired from the ſervice. He did not approve the principles on which Great Britain purſued that conteſt, and he would not therefore aid the cauſe with his ſword; but when ſolicited to join the American party, he declared that he thought it would be the higheſt act of diſhonour to employ againſt his native country that military ſkill which he had acquired in her ſervice.

"No," ſaid Lord Somerſet to the American agent employed to induce him to take up arms in the ſervice of the Coloniſts, "I will not fight in oppoſition to your forces, becauſe I think you have reaſon on your ſide; but I will never turn my ſword againſt the Prince who committed it to my hand for the defence of his privileges, and the extenſion of his rights.

"I ſhall

"I ſhall rejoice to hear that America has ſecured her own liberty; but if ever the conteſt becomes ſuch, as that one of the contending parties muſt be enſlaved to ſecure the repoſe of the other, I ſhall join the Engliſh forces, if poſſible, to ſubdue America. I hope, however, there is no likelihood of matters being ever carried to that extremity."

At the time when the Revolution (which has diſtracted that unhappy country) commenced, Lord Somerſet was in France, and felt a conſiderable portion of the enthuſiaſm which animated every true patriot at that period. He eſteemed the principle to be glorious, and the execution, at firſt, good.—With heartfelt ſatisfaction he joined in ſinging a requiem to the eternal repoſe of the

ſhade of Deſpotiſm, and exulted over the ruins of the Baſtile; but when the ſelfiſh deſigns of Duc D'Orleans (he who, amidſt the affected humility of Citoyen Egalité, cheriſhed a heart as cruel, a ſoul as deliberately depraved, and a head as proudly enterpriſing as that arch deſpot, the *immortal Louis the Fourteenth!)* and other movers of the Revolution were unmaſked, he began to be diſguſted with beholding its progreſs.

Too ſoon the time arrived when the name of liberty was proſtituted to juſtify every horror of anarchy, injuſtice, and cruelty;—and Lord Somerſet fled from the wretched ſcene of miſeries and crimes, convinced, in his own mind, that in any way to unſettle the government of a kingdom, was to expoſe it to ruin and devaſtation.

When,

When, on his return to England, he heard his diſaffected fellow-ſubjects bellowing for *reform*, and exclaiming againſt the exiſting Government, he would always ſay—

"I grant you that State affairs might be better conducted; but how are matters to be amended? A change of Miniſters may produce, in ſome reſpects, a change of meaſures; but depend on it, that whoever holds the helm of State, will ſtill adhere to thoſe ſyſtems which to you appear oppreſſive, but which are the ſafeguards of miniſterial power. Time may effect a reform; but to attempt to enforce one muſt produce a ſtruggle, that would probably reduce England to the ſtate of France, than which nothing can be more ſhocking to humanity, and more offenſive to common ſenſe to approve or juſtify."

With ſentiments ſo moderate, but with ſuch determined opinions of his own, Lord Somerſet would perhaps have been better pleaſed to ſee his ſon quietly devote himſelf to domeſtic purſuits, and the acquirement of ſtudious knowledge; but as young Delville preferred the activity of a profeſſional life, his father would not oppoſe him: and when remonſtrated with by one of his moſt intimate and valued friends, on his permitting the young man to embark in a line of life that could only give additional ſtrength to thoſe prejudices that he knew him to entertain, his Lordſhip replied—

"It is true that Piercy's opinions are not quite ſo liberal as I could wiſh them to be; but from his earlieſt childhood I have inſtructed him to think for himſelf, and

am

am not now ſo unreaſonable as to find fault with him for practiſing the leſſons I myſelf taught him. In impreſſing his mind with a ſenſe of the many advantages of the Britiſh Conſtitution, he has unluckily taken up the notion that no other can be equally good in another country; and La Fayette is, equally with Marat, by him devoted to perdition.—A time will, however, I have no doubt, arrive, when he will decide with more coolneſs and moderation; for if his father's opinions were corrected in a military life, his may more eaſily be ſo in a naval. To the ſailor it ſignifies not whether he ſerves a King or a Republic;—he fights againſt the enemies of his country alone; to the ariſtocracy of the Lords of the Admiralty he looks for his orders; and of the Monarch, except during the Royal Summer tour to Weymouth, he hears little, and thinks leſs.

"A ſoldier, on the contrary, is as much obliged to adhere to the Monarch, under whoſe reign he commences his ſervices, as to the cauſe of the country in which he ſerves; he muſt ſpeak often of the Sovereign, and always with veneration; and if it comes in the ſhape of an official order, prefaced with 'it is his Majeſty's pleaſure,' he is to enſanguine his ſword in the life-blood of his fellow-ſubjects, whoſe perſons perhaps he loves, and whoſe principles he in his heart reveres. You will tell me, I know, that an Officer is not compelled to ſerve; that he may, when ordered on any duty repugnant to his ſenſe of right, reſign his commiſſion. It is true that he may; but when do we hear ſuch a proceeding laid to the account of principle? Is it not always attributed to puſillanimity? And where is the young man

of

of noble ſentiments, who will bear the thought of having ſuch a charge breathed againſt him?

"That of Piercy's opinions which moſt diſpleaſes me, is regarding what he calls the *ſwiniſh multitude*—a principle too much cheriſhed in Britain; and I rejoice that chance has thrown him into the ſervice of Sweden, as he will there learn to think and to feel more like a man than he at preſent does."

"But do you not think, my Lord, that his prejudices will be likely to be confirmed in a profeſſion where the human creature is certainly more of a machine than in any other, and where the moſt deſpotic authority is made uſe of, and abſolutely appears neceſſary?"

"No,

"No, my friend; I am fully acquainted with the heart of my boy! Tyranny, I know, he will never practiſe, and cruelty is abhorrent to his nature."

The argument did not terminate here; but the various diſcuſſions of the ſubject would be unintereſting, and ſhould therefore be omitted.

Mr. Delville therefore began his profeſſional career in a Swediſh ſhip, where he ſoon became a moſt excellent and accompliſhed Officer; and procured from the King, as a teſtimony of his approbation, a right to wear the inſignia of the order of the ſword.

Soon after war was declared by England againſt France, Sir Piercy, or rather the Chevalier

Chevalier Delville, returned to his native country, and entered on board the L——; and as he was in a ſhort time ordered to the Weſt Indies, he was there appointed a Lieutenant, and returning from thence, was, in ſix months afterwards, ſent with his ſhip on the Halifax ſtation.

Somerſet Caſtle ſeemed, to its fair inhabitants, to become abſolutely gloomy after the departure of Sir Piercy (who had ſpent a month there previous to his ſailing for America); and the ladies wandered about its extenſive improvements with languid inattention to their beauties, ſince the beloved brother, the lively friend was no longer the companion of their walks.

Mrs. Powis was of a diſpoſition keenly to feel the deprivation of amuſing ſociety, more parti-

particularly ſince ſhe had few reſources in herſelf. Placed in a boarding-ſchool at eight years of age, and taken from thence at ſixteen, to be married to a man old enough to be her father, and to whom ſhe was perfectly indifferent, ſhe had no ideas of her own, farther than what regarded her dreſs, for the elegance of which, and the ſplendour of her jewels, ſhe loved to be remarked.

So ſituated, with a gaiety of diſpoſition little ſhort of levity, and a perſon and face univerſally eſteemed pretty, it may be ſuppoſed that Mrs. Powis had many lovers;—but her heart was not formed of very inflammable materials, and her admirers only ſerved her as her ſport. With the moſt perfect eaſe and *naiveté*, ſhe would ſometimes entertain her old huſband with the flatteries

flatteries of her young lovers, and aſk him if he was not aſhamed of having monopolized ſo much beauty before it was preſented to the world.

Mr. Powis was preciſely the kind of man on whom this ſort of rattling converſation would make no diſagreeable impreſſion.—He was perfectly convinced of the innocence of heart of his wife, and felt the ſame ſort of pleaſure in her gaiety that he would have done in the playful tricks of a child of five years old.

The ſecond year after their marriage, Mr. Powis died, ſo perfectly ſatisfied with the conduct of his Emily, that he left her the whole of his large fortune without any reſtrictions whatever, but that ſhe ſhould, on

every

every affair of moment, conſult her maternal uncle, Lord Somerſet, and as often as poſſible be governed by his advice.

Mrs. Powis had not been a year a widow when ſhe found arranging the buſineſs of a family, to which ſhe had never been accuſtomed, much too perplexing and fatiguing for her; and ſhe offered Lord Somerſet one thouſand pounds per annum, out of three left her by her late huſband, to permit her to live juſt as ſhe pleaſed in his houſe. Mrs. Powis certainly obtained her deſire; but whether Lord Somerſet accepted the annuity, or, if he did, what uſe he made of it, is of little conſequence, and was not known in the neighbourhood.

The fair widow was now perfectly happy; and her ſpirits were ſtill ſo extremely lively, as often

often to prove oppreſſive to her gentle couſin, Miſs Delville, who, though three years younger in age, was at leaſt five years older in underſtanding and prudence.

The perſon of Philippa Delville would be beſt deſcribed by negatives, for there was nothing peculiarly ſtriking in her appearance; but there was a ſomething in her manners inconceivably attractive. She had derived from Nature ſtrong ſenſibility, which it had been the conſtant care of Lady Somerſet (who died when her daughter was about fifteen) to teach her to keep under proper government; and the more ſo, as Lord Somerſet was by no means a friend to the indulgence of fine feelings, which he called romantic nonſenſe.

Miſs

Miſs Delville poſſeſſed one of the moſt benevolent of hearts, and a meek, unaſſuming ſpirit, which was, however, ſupported by a high ſenſe of honour, and a ſmall ſhare of family pride, which the conſtant contemplation of the characters of her father and brother had given birth to.

To this brother Philippa was particularly attached: ſhe venerated her father, but ſhe almoſt adored him, and from the time of his departure for Halifax, her ſpirits ſeemed totally depreſſed; but as ſhe ſeemed to wiſh to avoid obſervation, friendſhip could not attempt to conſole her.

Mrs. Powis at firſt attributed the dejection of her couſin to her fears for the life of an only brother; but no ſuch

grief

grief had preyed on her ſpirits during his ſtay in the Weſt Indies: and Mrs. Powis was angry that ſhe ſhould be ſo irrational to indulge apprehenſions for his ſafety, now that no apparent danger exiſted.

CHAP. II.

ONE day, when Sir Piercy had been gone about ſix weeks, Mrs. Powis returned from a ſolitary walk in the garden (which was the fartheſt extent of her perambulations), and entering the library, where the family uſually ſat in a morning, ſhe found Miſs Delville juſt ſitting down to her drawing, which, however,

ever, ſhe ſeemed in no haſte to begin. An embroidery frame, which had employed her couſin a part of the morning, ſtood beſide her, and on it lay a book, which it appeared ſhe had been reading, as a paper with one of her ſhades of ſilk was placed between the leaves.

Mrs. Powis (who, in this variety of occupations, obſerved not the traces of uneaſineſs in the mind of Philippa) advanced to the frame; and as ſhe examined the work, ſaid, with an arch look, to her couſin—

"This orange-flower is poſitively very natural, and thoſe pretty dew-drops, with which you have been ornamenting its bloſſom, increaſe the effect amazingly."

Miſs

Miſs Delville looked up, and tried to appear compoſed; but ſhe felt her tears again beginning to flow, and bent her head down over her drawing.

Mrs. Powis then took up the book that lay on the frame, and obſerving it was De Florian's beautiful romance of Gonſalvo of Cordova—

"Gonſalvo!" ſhe exclaimed; adding, "Ah! I gueſs what you have been about. But pray, my dear, have you been weeping over the tender woes of Zoraida? Or are thoſe tears of ſorrow that no ſuch being is now to be found as my favourite hero, the generous Lara?"

Miſs Delville ſmiled a ſort of avowal of the charge; and Mrs. Powis would have thought

thought herſelf right in her conjectures, had ſhe not diſcovered that the book in queſtion was the firſt volume of the work.

" I ſee," cried ſhe, laughing, " that my ſweet Philippa weeps by anticipation, as I am ſure ſhe found nothing very moving in the hiſtory of the Spaniſh Moors. But come now, I know what is the matter," ſhe continued, approaching Miſs Delville, and ſtroking her cheek as ſhe ſpoke; " papa has been telling my pretty one that her new French maſter is coming. Don't cry though, child; he ſhall not ſcold you, for I will ſtay in the room to protect you, provided he does not take ſnuff, but the ſmell of that always makes me ſick; and I took an averſion to my French maſter at ſchool for no other reaſon in the world."

" I believe

"I believe," said Miss Delville, "the Chevalier de Moldine is rather a youngish man."

"A *youngish* man, Philippa! And pray how came you to know *that?* *You* have not been sifting old Madame Dacier?"

"No indeed, cousin. But if I should retort the accusation——"

"I should plead guilty," interrupted Mrs. Powis; "for I have been asking the good old governante ten thousand questions about him. She tells me that he is brother, and legal heir (if legality was the fashion in France) to the Count de Melanville, who was guillotined in Paris about a year ago, for crying '*Vive le Roi.*'—Is it not a strange thing, Philly," continued she, "that those

men who talk of women's wilfulneſs, and women's prating, cannot keep their tongues quiet, though they know their heads will pay for it?"

"But what elſe did you hear of the Chevalier?" enquired Miſs Delville.

"Oh, very little," replied Mrs. Powis.—"I was not in a humour to liſten to the family hiſtories that Madame Dacier was inclined to favour me with. I ſimply aſked if he were young or old, handſome or ugly?—She told me ſhe did not think he could be young, as ſhe had heard Lord Somerſet mention the Chevalier de Moldine as an intimate friend, ten years ago. But ſhe concludes he is handſome, as his mother was a Dacier."

"The

"The poor Chevalier," ſaid Miſs Delville, ſighing, "I ſhould ſcarcely ſuppoſe would have excited your curioſity; for good as you are, you think but little of the miſeries of the unfortunate emigrants; and this one appears in too humble a ſtation to promiſe you even the amuſement of flirting."

"I am not ſo certain on that point," ſaid the fair widow, ſmiling, as a ſervant introduced a gentleman, whom Miſs Delville knew to be the Chevalier de Moldine.

He appeared to be not much under thirty; but perhaps the dejection of his countenance, and a very dark complexion, made him look older than he really was.—His perſon, though not tall, was ſingularly elegant, and there was ſomething even com-

manding and dignified in his air. The natural expreſſion of his features was lively; but though a deep gloom ſeemed now to overſpread them, there was a ſparkling brilliancy in his large black eyes, which ſtill beamed ſpirit and intelligence, and even, at times, flaſhes of gaiety.

Such was the exterior of the Chevalier de Moldine, who, ſoon after his entrance, enquired if it would be agreeable to Mademoiſelle Delville to begin their leſſons immediately.

Miſs Delville, with the deepeſt bluſhes and evident reluctance, put Gonſalvo into his hand.

"Ah!" he cried, "is it poſſible that I behold this charming book in England?"

"You

"You did not then," ſaid Mrs. Powis, "expect ſo great a proof of judgment in Engliſh ladies?"

"Pardon me, Madame," returned the Chevalier; "I expected every thing from their judgment, though I confeſs but little from the ſenſibility of their hearts."

"You do not think, Chevalier, then, that the Engliſh ladies have the moſt ſuſceptible hearts in the world?"

Miſs Delville, afraid, from this beginning, that her couſin might carry the converſation rather too far, took the book from the Chevalier, in order to draw his attention to the hiſtory ſhe was going to begin.

The Chevalier coloured deeply; he had, for a moment, forgotten the inferiority of his preſent ſtation, and thought this action of Miſs Delville meant to rebuke him for it. He therefore made a ſort of apologizing bow to Mrs. Powis for the liberty he had taken, and opened a dictionary that lay on the table.

The countenance of De Moldine was too expreſſive, and Miſs Delville was too well acquainted with the language of looks not to perceive what he thought; and ſhe felt all that oppreſſive awkwardneſs, which is the natural conſequence to a ſenſible mind, of having offered any thing like an affront, however unintentional, to the unfortunate.

She, however, began to read, but her confuſion cauſed her to make many miſ-

takes.

takes. The Chevalier, notwithſtanding, eaſily perceived that ſhe was perfect miſtreſs of the language, and ſaid, with a ſmile—

"I imagine, Madame, that no greater knowledge of French will be requiſite to your being perfected in the Italian, or rather to your immediately commencing the ſtudy of Spaniſh."

Miſs Delville ſmiled alſo, but bluſhed as ſhe ſaid ſhe believed ſhe had received ſufficient inſtruction for one day. The ſweetneſs of her manner encouraged the Chevalier to ſay—

"Ah! permit me a little longer to inſtruct you, ſince it is only in doing ſo that I can have the pleaſure of being near you."

He then added, in a graver tone, "The felicity I have enjoyed during this laſt hour, has made me almoſt forget what I am; and it had nearly eſcaped my recollection that when my viſits ceaſe to be uſeful, they muſt be intruſive."

As he ſaid this, he bowed profoundly, and haſtened out of the room.

"Heigh-ho!" ſaid Mrs. Powis, "that is a charming young man, Philippa. But how could you treat him with ſuch frigid reſerve as you did?"

"Conſider, my dear Emily," returned Miſs Delville, "that it has pleaſed my father to engage the Chevalier as my tutor; and it is not for me, unleſs authorized by him

him (however I may feel), to remove Monſieur de Moldine from that line in which Lord Somerſet has preſented him to me.—I cannot treat him as an inferior; I muſt not behave to him as an equal; and I have only the medium line left me, of ſhunning all converſation with him."

"You are very prudent, couſin," ſaid Mrs. Powis, with an air ſomething between pleaſantry and peeviſhneſs.

"Indeed, Emily," returned Philippa, "I do not pretend to it; but when what is right and proper appears evident to me, I ſhould be unpardonable not to attend to it."

As ſhe concluded theſe words, Lord Somerſet, who had been riding all the early

part of the morning, entered the room, followed by De Moldine, whom he preſented to Mrs. Powis and his daughter, ſaying—

"This gentleman, my dear children, is one of my particular friends, to whom I have the higheſt obligations."

Miſs Delville, in evident confuſion, bluſhed, curtſied, and attempted to ſpeak; while Mrs. Powis, who felt not the peculiar delicacy of De Moldine's ſituation, in the ſame degree, ſaid, with alacrity—

"My Lord, we have already had the honour of ſeeing the Chevalier."

De Moldine appeared a little diſconcerted at firſt; but immediately addreſſing himſelf to Miſs Delville—

"Hitherto,"

"Hitherto," ſaid he, "Miſs Delville has only ſeen her preceptor; but now, perhaps, when recommended by her excellent parent, ſhe will permit me to conſider myſelf as one who may, without impertinence, claim the honour of being a candidate for her friendſhip."

Charmed by the ingenuous grace of his manner, Miſs Delville replied—

"Thoſe whom my father regard, are juſtly entitled to my conſideration; but when particular merit affords a double incentive to eſteem, it is moſt readily beſtowed, and the Chevalier de Moldine cannot fail of obtaining it."

From a compliment ſo encouraging, the Chevalier ſeemed to derive not only courage,

but gaiety for the remainder of the day, which he ſpent at the Caſtle; he was lively, inſtructive, and amuſing: he even ſpoke of his unhappy country with greater commiſeration for its calamities than bitterneſs againſt the authors of them; and when he took his leave in the evening, he ſaid, ſmiling—

"To-morrow, Miſs Delville, your Spaniſh tutor will attend you at the hour you appointed."

"No, no," cried Lord Somerſet, "I will have no more of this. It is really too wounding to my feelings to have my benefactor attending to teach my daughter any thing but eſteem for his virtues, and gratitude for his ſervices to her father. Viſit us often, my

dear Xavier, and always conſider me as a parent."

The expreſſive countenance of the Chevalier glowed with animation as his Lordſhip ſaid this; but he was unable (though a Frenchman) to articulate his feelings; and preſſing the hand of his generous friend, he hurried away.

As ſoon as he was gone, Lord Somerſet ſaid—

"I know not a more noble and benevolent ſoul than that of De Moldine: I wiſh I could prevail on him to reſide entirely with me."

"I would fain be informed, uncle," ſaid Mrs. Powis, now breaking a ſilence which ſhe

ſhe had almoſt uninterruptedly indulged for more than an hour, "what obligations this young man has conferred on you to render you ſo grateful?"

"The tale will probably tire your patience, Emily," replied his Lordſhip;—"but I will, notwithſtanding, relate it to my two girls, that they may admire my friend as much as I do."

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

"IT is now above ten years ſince I formed a ſtrict intimacy with the Chevalier Louis de Moldine, uncle to the preſent Count de Melanville; for ſuch (though he does not aſſume the title) is my young friend. Louis's brother, the then Count de Melanville, was little known to me; and his ſecond ſon, Xaxier, I had only ſeen once, when I viſited the academy at Liege, where he was educated, with his uncle.

"During my late reſidence in France, I did not ſee my friend Louis, as I, at that time,

time, thought him wrong in adhering to the Royal party; and he condemned me for favouring that which, at the commencement of the Revolution, was juſtly ſtyled the Patriotic.

" In the autumn of 1791 I found myſelf neceſſitated to quit the place where I had till then reſided, and enter Burgundy, where you remember I had a ſevere illneſs; but at the time I wrote you an account of my indiſpoſition, it would have proved the certain ruin of my generous young friend to mention him, as letters were by no means ſafe.

" Himſelf an exile from his native manſion, proſcribed, and dreading even to attempt leaving that country in which his father

father had been murdered—his uncle, a man of above ſixty, impriſoned in the gloomy dungeons of nominal patriotiſm—and his brother continually in danger of the guillotine, Xavier de Moldine loſt not ſight of his humanity. He diſcovered that a ſtranger lay ſick in the village near which he was concealed, and braving every danger, came to me.

" He found me delirious in a fever, unable to inform him of the claim I might be thought to have on his kindneſs by my friendſhip for his uncle. My danger from the Government, as well as my diſtemper, was extreme: I had called myſelf a Swede, but, in the paroxyſms of my fever, I talked of a thouſand incoherent things in Engliſh. My ſervant endeavoured to conceal the knowledge

knowledge of my country I thus betrayed, from the people of the houſe; but my inceſſant vociferation was neceſſarily heard by every perſon in the dwelling, and Jontine, my ſervant, afraid of being himſelf involved in danger, fled, and left me."

"I had conceived," interrupted Mrs. Powis, "that war was not declared between France and England at ſo early a period as 1791. If ſo, how were you in danger?"

"It is true, my dear," his Lordſhip replied, "that we had not then abſolutely taken up arms; but nevertheleſs the Engliſh were expoſed to perpetual inconvenience from ſuſpicion and impriſonment; and many Britiſh ſubjects fell victims to the hatred and jealouſy of our good friends, the French, before Lord G——— was recalled.

"Jontine,"

" Jontine," Lord Somerſet continued, " left me to my fate. It was a propitious one; for De Moldine became my guardian genius. Careleſs of his own ſafety, he attended me with the moſt unremitting tenderneſs. When I recovered, and he informed me of his ſituation, I entreated him to take advantage of the paſſport I had procured for myſelf and ſervant to leave France. Jontine had deſerted me, and I tried to prevail on Xavier to aſſume the diſguiſe of his livery, to eſcape from the wretches who were in purſuit of him.

" The courage and magnanimity of this young man were now to aſtoniſh me as much as his humanity had done. He refuſed to accompany me.

' I am

'I am proſcribed,' ſaid De Moldine;—'and thoſe who ſhould aſſiſt my eſcape, would be implicated in the guilt for which, if I am taken, I muſt ſuffer.'

'What guilt?' I enquired haſtily; for I was ſurpriſed to hear him avow his being criminal. He replied—

'The unpardonable crime of procuring for the amiable and unfortunate Madame Elizabeth a ſmall quantity of laudanum, which ſhe deſired to have, in the hope that ſhe might thence procure from ſleep ſome alleviation of her ſorrows.'

"I expreſſed my ſurpriſe that he ſhould have been able to procure admittance to the Royal captive; but he would not tell me how,

how, as in that another perſon was involved*. But when I condemned him for putting the means of dying into the hands of a woman ſo ſituated, I ſhall never forget the look he gave me, any more than his reply.

'When,' ſaid Xavier, 'I preſented the ſiſter of my Sovereign with the phial that contained above an ounce of laudanum, I had no more apprehenſions regarding the uſe ſhe might make of it, than if it had been ſimple water. I thought within myſelf, this is the ſame heroic Elizabeth whoſe attachment to her brother has enabled her to encounter every evil of impriſonment, inſult,

* It is a circumſtance, I believe, generally known, not only that Madame Elizabeth procured the laudanum when confined in the Temple, but that the ſoldier, whom ſhe had prevailed on to purchaſe it, was guillotined for the offence.

and

and apprehended death. Her ſoul roſe ſuperior to ſelfiſh cares and fears in the hour of diſtreſs to thoſe weeping relatives that ſurrounded her; and will the Royal Elizabeth now poorly ſteal from a world where ſhe may be yet of ſervice to thoſe ſhe loves? or can her generous and elevated ſoul endure the idea of expoſing a wretched man, whom pity has led to meet danger for her ſake, to certain death? No, it is impoſſible!—Yet,' continued Moldine, 'this little act of kindneſs was diſcovered by the cruel perſecutors of the Royal Family: I was unfortunately ſuſpected to be the perſon who aſſiſted the Princeſs, and my life is in the moſt imminent danger.'

"He further told me," continued Lord Somerſet, "that he was not without hope of ſoon

ſoon being enabled to leave France, and paſs over into England. I found he was but ſlenderly provided with money; but though I could offer, and he wiſhed to accept pecuniary aſſiſtance from me, he dared not; as the knowledge that he poſſeſſed a few Engliſh guineas, or coin of any kind, would prove almoſt as dangerous to him as his ſervices to the unfortunate Elizabeth.

"I left France, therefore, alone, and returned hither, where the pleaſure of meeting Piercy and my two girls almoſt obliterated Moldine from my memory. I, however, a fortnight ago diſcovered that he was in England, and wrote to him to invite him down hither, encloſing a trifling bank note. By the next poſt he returned three-fourths of the amount of my bill, aſſuring me that what

what he had kept was as much as he could think of accepting, as it would ſupport him till he got into a way of earning his bread by teaching the French, Spaniſh, and Italian languages: he alſo declined my invitation. I knew his high ſpirit too well not to humour, that I might ſubdue it; and wrote him word, that ſince ſuch were his plans, I wiſhed to engage him, at a ſettled ſalary, as tutor to my daughter, and without much difficulty prevailed on him to come down to the country.

"It was at his particular deſire that I was out of the way this morning when he came to give his firſt (and I am determined it ſhall be his laſt) leſſon. If you chuſe to learn Spaniſh from him, he muſt teach you in the ſame manner that Piercy tried to make you acquainted with Swediſh."

Lord

Lord Somerſet concluded.—Miſs Delville had heard his relation with all that benevolent pleaſure which a generous mind receives from the certainty that it has congenial ſpirits in exiſtence. Had ſhe been one of thoſe perſons who weep over every intereſting tale, ſhe had heard this with emotions that would have drawn torrents of tears from her eyes; but ſhe could not expreſs what ſhe felt, and ſo continued ſilent long after her father ceaſed to ſpeak.

Not ſo Mrs. Powis.—She declared ſhe had never heard of ſo great a hero as De Moldine, or more properly, the Count de Melanville, ſaying, half gaily—

"I have heard of great deeds performed by men when inſpired by the *amor patriæ*,

and when animated by love; but that gentle, unclaimed duty ſhould prompt a man to encounter all the formidable dangers of the National Convention—that benevolence, unaided by previous friendſhip, ſhould enable its poſſeſſor to brave the dread of diſcovery, and the horrible evils that would have attended it—Oh this was being more heroic even than my long admired Lara!—I wonder if he is as inſenſible, for I ſee he wears the Croſs of Malta."

"You are miſtaken, Emily," ſaid Lord Somerſet.—"The little croſs which Xavier wears, is that of St. Louis: it once belonged to the late Louis Seize, and was preſented to him by Madame Elizabeth. As the order is now extinct, he does not ſcruple to wear it; though (notwithſtanding he was entitled to the Croix) he never obtained it."

Lord

Lord Somerſet then aſked his daughter what ſhe thought of the conduct of the young Count?

"That it is above praiſe," replied Miſs Delville, immediately retiring to her own room.

"I am glad ſhe thinks ſo," cried Lord Somerſet, throwing the book he had hitherto been playing with down upon the table, and riſing to traverſe the room, "I am glad ſhe thinks ſo, very glad."—Then approaching Mrs. Powis, cloſe to whom he took a ſeat, and ſeeming ſcarcely to know that he was moſt carefully ſpreading the netting ſhe was about upon his knee, he added,—"Nothing, my dear Emily, could give me ſo much pleaſure as to know that Philippa

had a proper ſenſe of the merit of the Count de Melanville. He is a noble fellow! I already conſider him as a ſon; and only your happy marriage, or Piercy's, could give me equal pleaſure with beſtowing my girl and forty thouſand pounds on this young Frenchman."

"Pray," enquired Mrs. Powis, with an arch ſmile, though ſhe was more than half ſerious, "would not your niece, with three thouſand a year, do exactly as well to reward the virtues of this Lara?"

"No, Emily," replied his Lordſhip; "I ſhould rather think it incumbent on me to oppoſe your marrying Melanville. In diſpoſing of my daughter, I have no one to conſult, except my ſon; but you are a ſacred truſt

truſt bequeathed to me by my late friend, Mr. Powis, and I ſhould not think myſelf juſtified in countenancing you to beſtow the eſtate he left you on a man of no fortune."

"And ſo," cried Mrs. Powis, "becauſe I happen to be left in that fortunate ſtate of affluence which puts it in my power to diſregard every intereſted ſentiment but the one that would lead me to make *myſelf* happy, I muſt not think of marrying any man to whom my fortune would bring any great increaſe of comfort and felicity? No! I muſt add one to the number of thoſe who have given proofs of the juſtice of the proverb—"Much would have more!"

"You miſtake me, my dear Emily," ſaid Lord Somerſet, the moment the almoſt

peeviſh volubility of his niece would give him leave to ſpeak;—" you well know it is not my wiſh, if it were in my power, to controul you. I moſt heartily deſpiſe thoſe who, when they poſſeſs a ſufficient number of thouſands to procure them every elegant comfort, will coldly ſeek for an equivalent to their fortune in the perſon to whom (ſuch is the cant of the world) they give their affections."

A ſervant at this moment coming in to lay the cloth for ſupper in the library, the converſation was brought to an abrupt concluſion; but it had made a ſtrong impreſſion on the mind of Mrs. Powis.

To lay any reſtrictions on the will of a woman, is to give her an *inclination* to break them;

them; but the moment ſhe is directly or indirectly warned of any danger, ſhe never is at reſt till ſhe has diſcovered its full extent: and, like the curious obſerver who approaches too near the crater of a volcano in order to aſcertain its preciſe degree of danger, ſhe ſometimes goes ſo cloſe to the flame, that it is not without many ſcorches that ſhe eſcapes being entirely conſumed.

From this time the Count was a conſtant viſiter at the caſtle. It ſoon became perfectly evident to Lord Somerſet that Miſs Delville was the magnet of attraction to the young Frenchman; and his Lordſhip even fancied he could diſcover (through all his efforts) his ſtruggles to conceal his ſentiments, or to fly from the ſpell that ſeemed every moment ready to draw him

into a violation of his high ſenſe of honour and generoſity. Miſs Delville, in the meantime, was become almoſt perfect miſtreſs of the Spaniſh language, and had even acquired ſome knowledge of the Mooriſh tongue, with which, during a five years' reſidence in Spain, the Count had become familiar.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

SEVEN months had ſtolen quietly away ſince the departure of Sir Piercy for America; and during that time, neither the maſter of Somerſet Caſtle, his daughter, or his niece had ever felt any deſire to viſit the metropolis. Contented with the conſtant ſociety of the Count, and the occaſional viſits of their country neighbours, they deſired not to leave Somerſet Caſtle.—They were, however, beginning to expect an addition to the circle within its walls in

Sir Piercy, when Lord Somerſet received the following letter from him :—

London.

" Returned, after much too long an abſence, to my native country, I ſhall, in a few days, embrace my father, Philippa, and Emily. I ſhall claim a renewal of all kind tenderneſs for myſelf, and ſtill more for the fair creature I mean ſhall accompany me. I bring you, my Lord, a ward—to Philippa and Emily a friend and ſiſter.—My lovely charge is not unworthy of thoſe titles. She is the daughter of a gallant Subaltern Officer, who loſt his life ſome weeks before her birth on the plains of Still Water, and is the ſiſter of a man, who, for fifteen years, was unwearied in his duty as a Lieutenant

tenant in the Britiſh Navy. For more than two years he had lingered in the painful performance of that duty, from the conſequences of a wound received in the ſervice of his country;—on pain, inconvenience, and even on death the heroic Hennington could ſmile! But the idea that his Serena was poor, and would be, at his deceaſe, unprotected, was too much for even the gallant ſpirit of my noble friend to endure with fortitude.

"Could I, my Lord?—(I appeal to your own generous heart)—could I feel conſcious that only ſplendid proſpects in life awaited myſelf—that I was bleſſed with a parent who never yet checked any benevolent impulſe of my heart, and not relieve my friend from his agonizing anxiety for the fate of his

ſiſter?—I promiſed, ſolemnly promiſed, to become her guardian and protector; and let the conſequence be what it may, I will adhere to my engagements. But the female character is too ſacred to be expoſed by my being the ſole guardian of Miſs Hennington; and to you, my Lord, unleſs you decline the office, I ſhall confide her. She is beautiful, artleſs, and unhappy; and I know that thoſe are ſufficient claims on your kindneſs and that of my dear good girls, whom I hope in a few days to ſee, to introduce Serena, and to aſſure them how much I am their affectionate brother,

"PIERCY DELVILLE."

"How I glory in my ſon!" exclaimed Lord Somerſet with emotion, as ſoon as he

had peruſed the letter, throwing it on the table.—" See, my dear girls, what an acquiſition you are going to receive from my noble Piercy; and tell me, is not that parent happy whoſe ſon writes to him as mine has done to me? Confident in my honour, and affection for him, he does not deſire me to give my ſanction to his performing his promiſe, but calls upon me, as a man, to aid him in his generous taſk!—Philippa, Emily, Miſs Hennington muſt be as a ſiſter to you both."

So delighted was the good old man with the proſpect of receiving his new gueſt, that he would ſcarcely give Miſs Delville time to read her brother's letter, before he hurried her away to give orders for the proper accommodation of Miſs Hennington; nor could

could he enjoy a moment's repoſe till aſſured that her apartment was in perfect readineſs to receive her. Yet, notwithſtanding all this impatience of preparation, it was not till the evening of the fourth day from the time Lord Somerſet received the letter of his ſon, that the carriage, which had been ſent to meet Delville, drove up the avenue of the caſtle.

His Lordſhip, with Philippa and Mrs. Powis, whoſe curioſity had led her to exert herſelf in walking, met it at ſome diſtance from the houſe, and were delighted when Sir Piercy, ſpringing from it, embraced them all, and ſeemed, for a moment, to forget his fair ward, who would not have been diſcovered to be in the chaiſe, had not a part of her habit hung out of the door. Lord Somerſet,

Somerſet, inſtantly recollecting himſelf, advanced towards the carriage; but Sir Piercy prevented him, and himſelf aſſiſted Miſs Hennington to alight. She was greeted with a moſt joyful welcome from all parties; but the mild and affectionate ſalutation of Philippa ſeemed to give peculiar pleaſure to Delville on the part of his fair charge. As they walked towards the houſe, he made each of them take an arm, and ſeemed impatient for their friendſhip to commence.—Mrs. Powis had now (as, with Lord Somerſet, ſhe followed them) an opportunity of ſatisfying her curioſity by examining the perſon of the ſtranger. Her figure was tall, extremely ſlender, and, though ſhe ſtooped a little, perfectly graceful. Her hair was long, dark, and gloſſy, and being without powder, was let to hang looſe over her ſhoulders,

ſhoulders, and down to the waiſt of her plain black riding-dreſs. In the few moments that had elapſed between her leaving the carriage, and the party moving forwards, Mrs. Powis had alſo remarked that the caſt of her features was perfectly Grecian, and might, from their fair paleneſs, be miſtaken for white marble, had it not been for the low even eyebrows, and the long black eye-laſhes, that ſeemed to reſt on her cheeks.—At the moment ſhe had been ſaluted by her new friends, ſhe had undrawn thoſe fringed curtains, and diſcovered a pair of large ſoft eyes of the darkeſt hazle; and the faint colour that then ſtole over her countenance made the obſerving Mrs. Powis pronounce, that Miſs Hennington would be perfectly beautiful if ſhe had but a complexion, and looked a little more alive.

In

In truth, the lovely Serena ſeemed ſcarcely to be more than in exiſtence. Fixed in the expreſſion of deep and miſerable ſorrow, her features had none of that lively play that renders thoſe of youth in general ſo amuſing and intereſting; and, notwithſtanding their perfect formation, there ſeemed a ſomething wanting to moſt beholders. In general ſhe was thought to want animation, but there were perſons (and Miſs Delville amongſt the reſt) who preferred the patient melancholy of her aſpect to the moſt brilliant expreſſion of ſpirit or vivacity.

When the party were aſſembled in the drawing-room of the caſtle, Lord Somerſet, who had placed himſelf beſide his gueſt, endeavoured, with the moſt attentive politeneſs, to draw her into converſation. She liſtened

liſtened with ſweetneſs, and her accents in replying were ſoft and harmonious; but her words were few, and the ſighs that would, ſpite of her efforts, eſcape her, were deep and frequent.

Delville whiſpered his ſiſter that Miſs Hennington would wiſh to retire early, and Philippa inſtantly offered to ſhew her the apartment deſtined for her.

As they were leaving the room together, Sir Piercy followed them, and ſaid to his ward—

"Serena, you will return hither no more this night."

"Not if Miſs Delville will excuſe my retiring, and permit me now to take my leave of his Lordſhip and Mrs. Powis."

"Do

"Do not mind good nights," ſaid Miſs Delville, kindly; "you are fatigued, and I will apologize for your leaving our family circle."

Miſs Hennington bowed her thanks, and was departing, when Sir Piercy reproachfully reſumed—

"Am I to be deprived of my privileges, Serena, becauſe you have found other tender friends?"

Miſs Hennington raiſed her eyes to his face, and, with a ſmile of more ſweetneſs than gaiety, preſented him her hand, ſaying, "Good night!" with a fervency that made it appear like a bleſſing.

"Good

"Good night!" repeated Sir Piercy.—"Good night, dear Serena!" and returned to the ſofa where his father was ſitting.

"Your ward, Piercy," cried Lord Somerſet, "is the moſt beautiful creature I ever beheld!"

"She is very like her brother," returned Delville, ſighing.

"Have you known her long?" enquired his Lordſhip; "you ſeem familiar with her."

"Almoſt two years, my Lord. I firſt met her at Jamaica."

"Then I wonder you never mentioned her when you were laſt at home," rejoined the Peer.

"I have

"I have ſeen many beautiful women, whoſe names I never thought of repeating," ſaid Delville.—"It was only when unfortunate that Serena became peculiarly intereſting."

"Alas! Piercy, I fear that is a claim poſſeſſed by too many of our officers' orphan daughters. But perhaps Miſs Hennington has been ſingularly unfortunate?"

"She has indeed, Sir," anſwered Delville.

Had Lord Somerſet been ſpeaking to any other young man than Sir Piercy, he would perhaps have hinted that the griefs of the fair Serena appeared magnified above reality to the eyes that admired her; but his Lordſhip

Lordſhip knew his ſon too well to doubt that if he loved Miſs Hennington, he would have declared it at once.

Mrs. Powis, however, made the implication by ſaying, "She is certainly ſingularly handſome."

"Her charms, Emily," returned Sir Piercy, gravely, "have not much weight with a man who has no view to poſſeſſing them."

Mrs. Powis was diſſatisfied with the coldneſs of Delville's manner. She had ſettled it in her own mind that her couſin muſt be in love with his ward, and was almoſt diſpleaſed with him for not being ſo.

Emily

Emily Powis was one of the ſiſterhood (or it might as well be called the *fraternity*) of *match-makers*, and ſhe had of late been peculiarly unlucky: ſhe had projected a match for herſelf with the Count de Melanville, and the cruel Count had ſlighted her for her couſin; but Emily Powis loved not Philippa the leſs for the diſappointment ſhe had occaſioned her, probably becauſe Philippa ſeemed heedleſs of her conqueſt.

When Miſs Delville returned to the drawing-room alone, Lord Somerſet enquired for their gueſt. She mentioned her deſire of being excuſed from attending ſupper, and added, "Miſs Hennington is by no means well."

Miſs Delville ſpoke to her father, but ſhe looked at her brother with much meaning

in

in her countenance, and almoſt immediately ſtrolled into the adjoining library. Thither Sir Piercy followed, entreating to be told what was the matter with Serena.

"I know not," replied his ſiſter.—"She appears to ſuffer extremely from ſome poignant ſorrow, which, if ſhe ſtruggles thus to ſuppreſs, will ſhake her delicate frame to atoms. She has been almoſt in hyſterics ever ſince we left the room. I wiſh you would ſee her."

"Poor Serena! No, Philippa: her ſorrows lie too deep to admit of any conſolations but thoſe of time."

"But this violent grief——"

Miſs Delville was interrupted by Sir Piercy.

"Philippa,

"Philippa, it is ſcarcely a month ſince ſhe loſt an only brother!"

There was an evident appeal to the feelings of Philippa in the words of Delville: ſhe fancied they were meant to accuſe her of indifference, and could not reſtrain her tears. There is nothing more cruelly wounding to a ſenſible mind than to find its attachment doubted by the object of its utmoſt tenderneſs; and Delville was to his ſiſter the deareſt and moſt perfect being in exiſtence. He obſerved her emotion, and lamented having cauſed it. This ſeemed ſtrange; for Sir Piercy never ſaid any thing that he did not think juſt, and never apologized to any perſon for what he conceived merited. He, however, adviſed Miſs Delville to leave her gueſt in uninterrupted repoſe for that night.

"You muſt conſider," ſaid he, "that ſhe has had a long journey, and her ſpirits, as well as her perſon, are fatigued. To-morrow we ſhall ſee her more compoſed."

Miſs Delville replied—"Probably;" and the converſation ended by their both returning to the drawing-room.

The morrow came, and Miſs Hennington was more compoſed, but not more cheerful. On this day the Count de Melanville was introduced to Serena and Sir Piercy.

When preſented by Miſs Delville to the former, he ſeemed ſurpriſed, and ſaid—

"I was on the point of ſaluting this lady as one well known to me!"

"Perhaps

"Perhaps you have met before?" remarked Mrs. Powis.

"No, Madam. The perſon whom Miſs Hennington ſo much reſembles was a married lady."

After the Count had been firſt named to her, Miſs Hennington did not look up, or appear to hear what was ſaid; but Sir Piercy meaſured Melanville with his eyes whilſt he was ſpeaking, and ſoon afterwards offered to walk with him in the park, and they left the houſe together.

They returned in about two hours; and from that day a friendſhip ſeemed cloſely cemented betwixt them. The ſtudies of Miſs Delville were ſuſpended while

De Melanville took long walks with her brother, from which, however, neither of them were ever obſerved to return in good ſpirits. This was not ſo perceptible in the Count as in Sir Piercy: the former had never appeared very gay ſince his reſidence in the neighbourhood of Somerſet Caſtle; but the latter had, till his laſt arrival there, been one of the moſt lively, volatile creatures in exiſtence: he was now as remarkably grave, and was never ſeen to ſmile, though he was often heard to ſigh.

Mrs. Powis ſagely pronounced that her couſin Piercy was in love; but with whom ſhe could not divine. Had it been with the penſive image of melancholy, Miſs Hennington, there would, ſhe thought, be no cauſe for his dejection; ſince, if ever the counte-

nance

nance of Serena wore even an attempt at a ſmile, it was when he addreſſed her. With whom then could it be? Mrs. Powis conſulted Philippa, but ſhe could only aſſiſt her with conjecture; and ſhe was not always willing to lend the fair widow even her attention.

Mrs. Powis was not the only perſon in the caſtle to whom the change in Sir Piercy's diſpoſition occaſioned ſurpriſe. Lord Somerſet had obſerved him of late with the moſt ſcrutinizing attention, only to be every day more perplexed than the laſt. That Delville loved Serena, he thought beyond a doubt; but wherefore ſhould he affect ſilence and concealment? Lord Somerſet might have known by making an enquiry; but he had never yet demanded the confi-

dence of his ſon, and he would not, on this occaſion, begin. To Serena, of whom he was become extremely fond, he often ſpoke of Delville, with a view of diſcovering her ſentiments. She apparently declared them with the utmoſt ingenuouſneſs, but ſhe avowed only the moſt enthuſiaſtic gratitude and the trueſt friendſhip; yet there was more of love than any other ſentiment in her eyes when they happened to meet his, and on ſuch occaſions Lord Somerſet remarked that ſhe conſtantly bluſhed.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

WHEN Miſs Hennington had been about three months an inmate of Somerſet Caſtle, a little incident occurred that made a conſiderable impreſſion on ſome of the members of the family, and produced ſome ſcenes not of the moſt agreeable nature.

One evening that Lord Somerſet, Delville, and the three ladies were ſitting in the library, Mrs. Powis happened to leave the room for a few moments, and, on her return, took up a pocket handkerchief that

lay upon the floor, enquiring who had dropped one. No perſon anſwered, and ſhe brought it over to the light, to ſee whether it bore any mark by which ſhe could diſcover the owner.

The initials S. D. were worked in hair in one of the corners. Mrs. Powis repeated the letters, adding, "It does not belong to any of us; whoſe can it be?"

Sir Piercy took it out of her hand, and having looked at the mark, handed it acroſs the table to Miſs Hennington, ſaying, "Serena, I believe it is your's."

She bluſhed very deeply as ſhe received it, and put it into her pocket.

Not

Not the ſlighteſt word or look during this trifling tranſaction had eſcaped the penetrating eye of Lord Somerſet, but he made no comment on it at the time; nor did he intend to take any notice of it till the next morning, when the lateſt conjectures of Mrs. Powis being, by the affair of the handkerchief, become certainties, ſhe imparted them to her uncle; and the conſequence was, his deſiring to ſee Sir Piercy for a few moments alone in his ſtudy.

Delville entered the room with an air of much diſcompoſure, and ſat down without ſpeaking.

Lord Somerſet was walking about the room with a newſpaper in his hand, which he affected to have been reading, though he

was a total ſtranger to the intelligence it contained.

"Piercy," and "my Lord," were the only words pronounced for ſeveral minutes.—At length his Lordſhip began—

"Piercy, you muſt be conſcious that I never yet aſſumed the authoritative tone of a father in ſpeaking to you, and I do not mean it now; but I ſhall expect you will ſatisfy my doubts on certain ſubjects, as a friend. You know that in a few days I muſt go to attend my Parliamentary duties; but I cannot leave you here alone with my girls, without knowing upon what terms you remain. I have ſtrong reaſons to ſuppoſe that you are married, and I now demand if it be really the caſe?"

"Suffer

"Suffer me, my Lord, to enquire what are your reaſons for ſuch a ſuppoſition."

"My own obſervations," replied his Lordſhip, "and not only that, but your late conduct towards Miſs Hennington."

"Miſs Hennington, my Lord!" interrupted Delville.

"Serena Delville then, Piercy!"

"My Lord, I know no ſuch perſon."

"Good God, Delville, how you perplex me!" cried Lord Somerſet; adding, "Is not Serena your wife?"

"No, my Lord; by Heaven ſhe is not!"

"Do you mean to marry her?" enquired his Lordſhip.

"That is a queſtion, Sir, that I cannot anſwer."

"Why not, my ſon?"

"Becauſe it depends upon circumſtances."

"I know that it muſt depend upon the ſentiments of Miſs Hennington; but can you be ſtill a ſtranger to thoſe?"

"Partly, I believe, I am," anſwered the incomprehenſible young man.

"Tell me ſincerely, Delville, do you not love her?"

"I will

"I will not deceive you, my Lord, though there might be virtue in a denial—I love her more than my own ſoul."

"And you naturally wiſh that ſhe ſhould feel a return of the ſame ſentiments?"

"Do you eſteem Nature to be an unerring guide?"

Lord Somerſet was aſtoniſhed at the queſtion; but he replied, "When accompanied by Virtue, the path ſhe purſues is certainly the one to happineſs."

"My Lord, you are miſtaken; Nature and Virtue together lead not to the gate of felicity; ſuffer the former to be your guide, and pleaſure awaits you; fetter her with

the company of Virtue, they diſagree about the path, and miſery overtakes them.— Nature preſents me with her faireſt work, and commands me to love! Virtue is the ſource and object of my paſſion! yet Virtue forbids its indulgence; nay, ſhould ſhe do otherwiſe, ſhe ceaſes to inſpire the ſentiment ſhe would cheriſh. Can thoſe then be unerring guides? My Lord, they are not.— No two warring ſentiments can therefore be both the proper guides of man."

Delville was continuing, when Lord Somerſet entreated him to be ſilent; but he did not himſelf take up the argument. He was entangled in a train of thought from which he could perceive no means of extricating himſelf, or connecting his ideas.— Lord Somerſet poſſeſſed one of the beſt and

cleareſt

cleareſt underſtandings; but he was unaccuſtomed to the petulant ſophiſtry of young men, and when once involved in an argument with them, he generally loſt himſelf.—He was perplexed by ſyſtems whoſe abſurdity he deſpiſed, and borne down by a torrent of words, to which he could annex no meaning; and though he was unconvinced, was frequently obliged to own himſelf vanquiſhed, becauſe confuſed.

The ſteward of his Lordſhip juſt now making his appearance, with an account book under his arm, and a pen ſtuck in the ſpring of his ſpectacles, was a ſeaſonable relief to both parties, as it gave Delville an opportunity of retiring, which he immediately did, well ſatisfied to have eſcaped a farther inveſtigation of his ſentiments for Serena.

Three days after this converſation Lord Somerſet departed for the metropolis, leaving the ladies under the protection of his ſon, and charging them all to be mindful of his friend, the Count de Melanville, and not to ſuffer him to be leſs frequent in his viſits than he had hitherto been.

Theſe injunctions were moſt readily complied with by Mrs. Powis in particular, who had now much more of the ſociety of the amiable Count than ſhe had yet enjoyed, or than was indeed conſiſtent with her future peace, conſidering that his heart was not quite ſo ſuſceptible as her own.

The beautiful Serena, to whom the ſalubrious air of Yorkſhire had not reſtored any conſiderable portion of health, or the attentions

tions of her friends, of cheerfulneſs, now again began to loſe what little of either ſhe had acquired; and Miſs Delville, who ſaw her rapid decline, was under the moſt cruel apprehenſions for her life. The fair invalid had poſitively refuſed to ſee any medical perſon, who might be conſulted on her ſtate of health; and Philippa, lamenting to her brother this obſtinacy of his ward, entreated him to deviſe ſome means of cheating her into receiving the viſits of a phyſician.

Sir Piercy promiſed to think of how it might be done; and one day riding over to York, returned the next, accompanied by a gentleman of great medical reputation, but with whoſe name Serena was totally unacquainted.

As

As Miſs Hennington did not confine herſelf to her chamber, ſhe neceſſarily dined in company with the ſtranger; and after dinner, being ſo extremely ill as to faint more than once, his exertions in her recovery procured him permiſſion to ſee her ſometimes in a profeſſional capacity. After having ſome converſation in private with her, however, he ridiculed the fears of Miſs Delville, and ſaid that change of ſcene would probably do much for her if ſhe would be prevailed on to try it.

An opportunity for proving the effect of this preſcription preſented itſelf a few days afterwards. Miſs Hennington received a letter from a ſiſter of her father's, who reſided in Norfolk, and had long neglected his family, deſcribing herſelf to be in a very bad

bad ſtate of health, and requeſting to ſee her niece, who ſhe promiſed ſhould be the heireſs of her fortune.

Serena conſulted Delville upon the point of accepting this invitation; and he, who wiſhed her to be independent even of himſelf, ſtrenuouſly adviſed the meaſure.—Philippa, however, oppoſed it, on the plea that Serena was too weak to make ſuch a journey, and her ſpirits too delicate to attend to a ſick perſon; but the phyſician being conſulted, declared he could not ſee that it would do her the leaſt injury, and an affirmative anſwer was accordingly returned to Mrs. Jane Hennington, in Norfolk. In leſs than a week that good lady ſent her own carriage with hired horſes, and her own maid, an elderly perſonage, of moſt reſpectable

able appearance, to eſcort her niece to her houſe; and Serena departed the ſame day it arrived, much to the regret of all the inhabitants of Somerſet Caſtle, of whom Mrs. Powis was not the one leaſt ſorry. In the firſt place, ſhe really loved Serena; and, in the ſecond, ſhe thought ſhe could perceive that her agreeable *tête-à-têtes* with the Count would now be at an end. During the three weeks that elapſed ſince the departure of Lord Somerſet, the ill health of Miſs Hennington had obliged her to retire at a very early hour in the evenings. Miſs Delville uſually accompanied her; and Sir Piercy ſeldom remained in the library long after they left it; or even when he did, he was too much abſorbed in melancholy contemplations to give much aid to converſation.

It

It would ſometimes, notwithſtanding the voluble propenſities of Mrs. Powis, be at a ſtand; and what was more natural than that the Count ſhould propoſe to read to her, except that the lady ſhould chuſe, in compliment to him, that the book ſhould be always a French one?

They were both admirers of Rouſſeau's writings; and the pathetic tale of Julie frequently afforded the amuſement of the evening. The mother of the Count was a native of Geneva, and he had frequently viſited the romantic ſcenes of Miellerie, and would ſometimes deſcribe them with yet finer touches of taſte than the incomparable author has done. He had ſometimes been in the habit of calling Emily his *couſine*; for the ſame reaſon that

St.

St. Preux made uſe of that appellation for the friend of Julie; and he now, not unfrequently, ſubſtituted the title of "La belle Claire," without reflecting that he betrayed his mental alluſion to the reſemblance he fancied he found betwixt Julie and Miſs Delville.

Miſs Delville might not perhaps have been ſo much flattered had ſhe known of the compariſon, for ſhe was not quite above the prudery ſo general amongſt Engliſh women of virtue: and ſhe would not have made any allowance for the country of De Melanville, that would lead her to conſider the compariſon between the heroine of Rouſſeau and herſelf, in its true light—that of the moſt pointed compliment.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

" ——————————— She alone
" Fills every ſenſe, and pants in every vein.
" Books are but formal dulneſs, tedious friends;
" And ſad amid the ſocial band he ſits,
" Lonely and unattentive."

THOMSON.

MISS DELVILLE, being now relieved from the anxious attention ſhe had of late paid to her beloved Serena, had now more leiſure to attend to the ſtill growing unhappineſs of her brother, and to the effect that it evidently had upon his health. All active purſuits

purſuits ſeemed now to have loſt their charms for him; and frequently the fineſt ſpring days imaginable would paſs away without his ever croſſing the threſhold of Lord Somerſet's ſtudy, where he now uſually ſat, in preference to the library, which ſtill remained chiefly uſed by the family. To this retirement Miſs Delville often followed him; and when ſhe found he perſiſted in declining any other ſociety, would bring her work, and requeſt him to read to her.—Sometimes he would ſay that he had a head-ache, and begging ſhe would excuſe him, would ſtroll out for an hour into the park; and Miſs Delville's principal object (that of diſturbing his gloomy, ſedentary habits) being thus obtained, ſhe would again join Mrs. Powis and the Count—too much to the ſatisfaction of the latter to be very pleaſing to the former.

But

But Sir Piercy did not always decline the taſk of reading to his ſiſter. He would ſometimes take up a Novel, or a volume of poetry, and appear intereſted in the ſtory of the one, or the ſentiments of the other, for an hour or two; but his mind, Philippa obſerved, would gradually wander from the ſubject; he would read a few pages abominably ill, and at laſt the book would fall from his unconſcious hand, and he would evidently feign being aſleep, to avoid converſation.

Sometimes, when a gloomy or wet day affected his nerves, and rendered him more ill than ordinary, he would ſit for hours beſide his attentive ſiſter; and while one of her white arms encircled his neck, would reſt his head upon her ſhoulder.

It was at ſuch times only that the unhappy Delville would ſeem to forget his cuſtomary caution, and, ſoftened by her kindneſs, would ſhed tears upon her boſom, and appear determined to reveal the cauſe of the ſorrow that preyed upon his mind; but ere the tale was begun, ſome keen remembrance would ſeem to dart acroſs him; he would riſe haſtily, and, uttering an impaſſioned exclamation, would fly to the ſolitude of the park.

One day Miſs Delville obſerved that, though in lower ſpirits than uſual, he was not ſo very averſe to converſation, and took courage to enquire the cauſe of that ſorrow that was undermining his health, and at times ſeemed ready to affect his reaſon.

"Philippa!" replied he, in a low and melancholy tone, "I know that you love me; but I am unworthy that you ſhould ſuffer for me the diſtreſs you evidently endure. Senſible that you deſerve all my confidence, a thouſand times have I been on the point of giving you, unaſked, the explanation you now demand; but as there are certain points on which I muſt ſtill remain ſilent, I heſitated to give you information that would only make you deſirous of knowing more than I dare tell you; yet I think I ſhould be leſs miſerable if you knew and participated in my ſorrows."

"Then freely relate them, my beloved Piercy," cried Miſs Delville, embracing her brother.—"Confide in me ſo far as you ſhall think me worthy; and dread not that

I ſhall ever more perſecute you with enquiries. Till this day, I have ever refrained from them, and I ſhall do ſo in future."

After a ſilence of ſeveral minutes, Delville ſaid, " Philippa, you have never loved, I think ?"

Miſs Delville bluſhed the deepeſt ſcarlet, but ſhe made no reply, and Sir Piercy reſumed the diſcourſe.

" You cannot then form an idea of the tortures that paſſion may inflict. I, alas! know them but too well. Years have I been the votary of that capricious deity !— Months have elapſed ſince it has been my torment, and I ſhall ſoon be its victim !— Yet, Philippa, it may perhaps be in your power

power to relieve my heart from a part of the weight that oppreſſes it, and I doubt not your inclination.—I adore Serena!"

This intelligence was not new to Miſs Delville.

"I have long known it to be ſo, Piercy," ſaid ſhe; "and, from the obſervations I have, in conſequence of that knowledge, made, I have every reaſon to think you may be happy if you will reſolve to be ſo. Serena cannot have an inſenſible heart."

"Oh no," ſighed Delville; "too well I know its ſuſceptibility."

"Too well, Piercy!" repeated Philippa; adding, "I have obſerved her narrowly, and I am certain ſhe loves you."

"Could I doubt it, Philippa, I ſhould not be quite ſo miſerable."

"Gracious Heaven, brother!" cried Miſs Delville, burſting into tears, "ſurely you are raving! Why would you be leſs unhappy if the woman you adore loved not you?"

"Even ſo, my ſiſter.—Is it not a misfortune to feel that one has rendered the angel, whoſe purity they adore, criminal in her own eyes."

"For God's ſake, Piercy, explain yourſelf."

"I muſt not," ſaid Delville, violently agitated, riſing, and pacing the room up and

and down with haſty and unequal ſteps.—After a few minutes ſpent in this manner, he again went to a ſeat beſide Miſs Delville, and reſumed—" Philippa, I have as yet repoſed no confidence in you; nor will I, unleſs you make me a ſolemn promiſe to be as ſilent as the grave, reſpecting the information I ſhall give you, except to one perſon, who is already in the ſecret; and will alſo ſwear that you will not be guided by illiberal prejudices, in denying (if you do deny) my requeſt."—Miſs Delville entered into the deſired engagements, and Sir Piercy continued.—" Know then, Philippa, that you and Emily have been impoſed on by a falſe tale concerning Mrs. Jane Hennington, and that Serena is at this moment at a cottage not a mile from the neareſt park gate, where, when ſhe left this, I concealed her."

" Your

"You concealed her! Oh Piercy, for what purpoſe!" cried Miſs Delville, with aſtoniſhment and grief imprinted on her countenance.

"To ſcreen her, my ſiſter, from the malice of a prying world, from the obſervation of the curious, and the ſtrictures of the malevolent."

"And will her retirement, think you, Delville, prevent all this? unleſs, indeed—can it——"

Miſs Delville heſitated, and her brother rejoined.

"You are right, Philippa.—Serena, in her concealment, hourly expects to become a mother!

mother! Almoſt overwhelmed with ſorrow, ſhe is too feeble, both in mind and body, not greatly to want a ſympathizing friend to ſooth and cheer her. You, my beloved ſiſter, muſt be that friend, or in future our hearts muſt be for ever eſtranged. I know, however, you will not refuſe to ſee and conſole my unhappy Serena."

Miſs Delville was not ſo entirely ſuperior to all prejudices as not to ſtart at ſuch a propoſition, as that of viſiting the miſtreſs of her brother, dear as he was to her, and ſincerely as ſhe wiſhed to oblige him. She made not any reply to the appeal his countenance made to her heart, though that heart throbbed with pity and affection both for him and the unhappy, the frail Serena.

At length, however, ſhe ſummoned recollection to entreat an explanation of thoſe apparently ſtrange circumſtances that had reduced Miſs Hennington to ſo ſad a ſituation.

"Philippa!" ſaid Sir Piercy, in a tone, and with a look of mournful reproach, "I fancied you were ſuperior to the ſenſeleſs prudery of your countrywomen; but I find I was miſtaken—grievouſly miſtaken; indeed! I thought you were above idle curioſity, but there too I have erred."

"Oh brother!" cried Miſs Delville, "can you indeed call it ſenſeleſs prudery, to feel aſtoniſhed at the fall of ſuch a being as Serena? Is it idle curioſity to wiſh to know every circumſtance that can palliate——"

She

She ſtopped abruptly, and Delville himſelf ſmiled; but his countenance inſtantly re-aſſuming its ſadneſs of expreſſion, he ſaid—

"Serena has not fallen—ſhe has been betrayed; but her ſoul is ſtill pure—pure even as your own, Philippa, and worthy of your affection."

The diſtreſs of Miſs Delville was augmented by every ſyllable her brother uttered; it gave her the cruelleſt pain to condemn him, and to hear him acknowledge that Serena had been betrayed; that he had made her guilty in her own eyes was too much for her ſenſibility! But the affectionate ſoftneſs of her nature overcoming every other idea, ſhe embraced Sir Piercy with tears, and deſired to be conducted to the concealment of Serena.

"I have not myſelf yet viſited it," continued Delville, after having thanked his ſiſter for her compliance—"She has yet ſeen no perſon but De Moldine, who calls on her every day on his way hither. When ſhe came to the cottage from York, whither ſhe went to elude diſcovery, he introduced her as one of the unfortunate Nobleſſe of his own country, and ſhe has ſince borne the name of Madame D'Albain, being ſuppoſed the wife of an Officer in the Army of the Princes, and a relation of our friend's.—This evening I ſhall ſee her; the intelligence I ſhall bring of your intention to viſit her, will make me welcome to her ſad abode. Alas! my ſiſter, is it not a cruel thought that I ſhould need a recommendation to admit me to the preſence of the woman my ſoul worſhips?"

Philippa

Philippa made no reply to this moſt painful enquiry; and after having ſettled that on the enſuing morning, at an early hour, Sir Piercy ſhould conduct her to the reſidence of Serena, they parted.

At ſupper that night Delville ſeemed leſs melancholy than uſual, and ſpoke more than he was accuſtomed to do, particularly concerning Sweden—a ſubject he ſeldom touched upon, except when well pleaſed. To Miſs Delville this was a favourite topic; ſhe had heard enough of the national character of the Swedes to eſteem them, and one perſon of that country ſhe had admired.

Sir Piercy had, at his laſt viſit to Somerſet Caſtle, been accompanied by a brother Chevalier, in the ſervice of England, though a Swediſh

a Swediſh ſubject; and he had univerſally inſpired the family with ſentiments of friendſhip and regard. This gentleman, who bore the name of Charles Guſtavus Bayar, was the only remaining male of a family which had poſſeſſed great opulence and power under the former Government of Sweden, but was now reduced ſo low, as to compel young Bayar either to live in inglorious obſcurity, on the wreck of the fortunes of his Houſe; or endeavour, by his exertions in the ſervice of his country, to procure a name for himſelf, and revive all the ſplendour and glory of a Houſe which had given birth to the noble, though miſtaken Cederſtroom, who, only ſupported by two others, reſolutely refuſed to falſify the oath he had taken to the States, before he knew that his King would ever call on him to aid in reſtoring to

the

the Crown and people of Sweden their power and liberties. As ſerving in ſome foreign Navy is the greateſt recommendation to thoſe who, like young Bayar, wiſh to attain exalted rank in that of their own country, he, at a very early age, entered on a ſailor's life in a Britiſh man of war; and, after having ſerved a ſufficient time to procure him a commiſſion, returned to Sweden, where he was a ſharer in the glory and in the recompence of that engagement which had procured for Sir Piercy Delville the honour of being admitted, with his friend, a Member of the Order of the Sword.

He had returned to England with Delville, and was now employed in the ſervice of that country, in which his firſt nautical information had been acquired. The Chevalier

valier Charles Bayar, was, when he viſited Somerſet Caſtle, between five and ſix-and-twenty. To the moſt ſtriking graces, and majeſty of figure, he united a face, which the moſt perfect regularity of features did not render unintereſting. With all the advantages of travel common to the youth of Sweden, he had learned a habit of reflection, which, however uncommon in a ſailor, by no means rendered him leſs daringly courageous, while it increaſed every benefit to be derived from having received a moſt excellent education, and having ſeen much of the world. With all the proud, unyielding honour of his kinſman, Cederſtroom, his temper was gentle, and his heart the ſeat of candour and ſenſibility. With the finiſhed politeneſs of a Swede, he united the warm-hearted appearance of ſincerity, which

diſtinguiſhes

diſtinguiſhes thoſe of his country.—Whenever the Chevalier Bayar ſpoke, the ſtamp of truth ſeemed to be imprinted on his fine countenance, and inſtant conviction and confidence followed his words.

During his ſhort ſtay at Somerſet Caſtle, he had evidently diſtinguiſhed Miſs Delville by his admiration. Too young when he had before been admitted into ſociety in England, to pay much attention to thoſe rules of conduct there which could not, at the time, affect him, he was ignorant that cuſtom rendered it diſhonourable for a man of the moſt diſtinguiſhed merit to declare an attachment to a woman, unleſs perfectly her equal in point of fortune; and Bayar made not the leaſt heſitation, the moment he was conſcious of it, to declare his paſſion for Miſs Delville to herſelf.

He

He was certain that even with the limited proviſion made by his country for her gallant defenders, either in the Army or Navy, he could, in the ſociety of the gentle Philippa, be perfectly happy; and he could not have loved her, had he imagined that ſhe would not be equally ſo with a man ſhe loved, though he might not be rich; and when Miſs Delville, aſtoniſhed at a profeſſion of ſerious love coming from a man whom ſhe had ſcarcely known a month, coldly requeſted the ſubject might not be mentioned, he received the command with that reſpectful ſubmiſſion which ever characterizes the behaviour of the truly gallant.

He never again intruded more of his converſation on her than ſhe choſe to encourage, and never, even by a look, repeated the offence

offence he ſuppoſed he had given, during the remaining time of his ſtay at the caſtle.

Whether Miſs Delville was piqued at his ſo ready acquieſcence in her commands, or grateful to him for his forbearance, Bayar could never decide; nor did he preſume, even in his own mind, to queſtion it: but after his departure, the Chevalier Charles was often the ſubject of her ſolitary thoughts; and ſometimes ſhe would weep, with mingled vexation, for the cold and contemptuous treatment ſhe had given his paſſion, and was ſorry that ſhe might probably ſee him no more; or if ſhe did, that there was little likelihood that his heart would continue impreſſed with a partiality ſhe regretted ſhe had not treated with more delicacy and kindneſs.

Such

Such was the origin of the tears ſhe had been ſhedding on her work, on the day Mrs. Powis had ſurpriſed her, and which ſhe would willingly have attributed to the pathetic powers of the elegant De Florian.

This being the preſent ſtate of Miſs Delville's mind, it was more ſoftly diſpoſed towards the unhappy Serena than her principles might otherwiſe have ſuffered her to be; yet, notwithſtanding the gentleneſs of her diſpoſition, ſhe felt ſome indignation at the frailty of Miſs Hennington: and perhaps Delville would have acted more wiſely had he endeavoured to intereſt his couſin rather than his ſiſter in her favour, ſince *her* pity would have been unmingled with an idea of reproach.

Mrs.

Mrs. Powis was good and virtuous; but ſhe uſed ſometimes laughingly to tell Philippa that it proceeded more from circumſtance than ſteadineſs in herſelf, and ſhe was not "extreme to mark what was done amiſs" by others.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

AFTER the family had ſeparated for the night, and Miſs Delville was nearly prepared for going to bed, ſhe was much ſurpriſed to ſee the door of her chamber open, and Delville enter the room.

"Be not alarmed, Philippa," ſaid he;—"I feared to aſk admittance by knocking, but you muſt permit me to ſay a few words to you."

Miſs

Miſs Delville deſired him to be ſeated ;— and whilſt ſhe continued pinning up her hair, he reſumed—

" I have, as I promiſed, been to viſit Serena, whom I found more tranquil than I could have even hoped. I told her of your intention of calling on her to-morrow morning, for which ſhe ſays ſhe cannot expreſs her gratitude to you, but wiſhes to defer it till the evening. You muſt, however, be guided on that point by your own judgment."

" Then," returned Miſs Delville, " if I do not go before breakfaſt, it will be impoſſible for me to go at all without letting Emily into the ſecret, or being tormented with her conjectures and her railleries. If, therefore,

therefore, Miſs Hennington cannot ſee me to-morrow morning, I ſhall defer my viſit till the ſame hour ſome other day; as, when Emily is aſleep, is the only time her curioſity can be evaded."

"At ſix, then," ſaid Sir Piercy, "meet me at the little park gate, and I will point out the path to the cottage; but as that is an hour when, by the coming of the labourers to their work, I ſhould be ſubjected to much obſervation, I cannot accompany you farther than the entrance of the wood."

This matter being thus finally arranged, Sir Piercy retired, and, on the following morning, was punctual to his appointment with his ſiſter, whom, however, he accompanied acroſs the park, to a ſmall gate fronting

ing the Eaſt, which opened into a pine wood, or rather grove, about a quarter of a mile broad, through which there was a beaten path.

On this path they entered, both ſilent and thoughtful. Delville had already paſſed the bounds he had preſcribed for himſelf, but he ſtill ſlowly proceeded, lingering to give his ſiſter her final directions how to find the cottage, till they came to the eaſtern ſide of the grove, where, no longer impeded by the branches, the bright glare of the ſun burſt upon their eyes. He then ſtopped, and deſiring Miſs Delville to purſue a path leading through a meadow a little to the left, they parted.

Miſs Delville continued her walk for a few minutes, when, arriving at a gate that

ſeparated the meadow from the public road, ſhe pauſed a while to admire the tranquil ſcene that preſented itſelf to her view. At the oppoſite ſide of the road there was no fence whatever; a narrow ſloping bank, covered with green ſward, only dividing it from a pool of conſiderable extent, which, though it was only occaſioned by the flatneſs of the valley at this part of a rapid ſtream, that wound down from the ſurrounding hills, had the appearance of a ſmooth and beautiful lake. About a hundred yards from the road, down a graſſy lane, ſtood a mill-houſe, at the back of which Delville had told his ſiſter ſhe muſt paſs, and get into a narrow path bordered with willows and alder-trees, which led, cloſe by the bank of the pool, to the cottage of Serena, which ſhe already diſcovered on the oppoſite ſide, by the

the curling ſmoke that aſcended from amongſt the trees, which, all but the long brick chimney, and a part of the thatch, was concealed.

Every object was rendered cheerful by the bright beams of the ſun; the mill had already begun to work, and its noiſe, with the daſhing of the water, mingling with the cries of the poultry, that were collecting round the miller's wife to be fed, and the ſhrill voices of four fine children, who were playing near the water, formed a combination of ſounds, the moſt agreeable imaginable to an unvitiated taſte, like that of Miſs Delville, who now continued her walk towards the cottage.

As ſhe approached the door, ſhe recollected that it had, about two years before,

ſerved as a temporary retirement to a very lovely and accompliſhed young woman, whom domeſtic unhappineſs had rendered unmindful of private virtue, though from public cenſures on her fame ſhe had fled, and reſided for ſeveral months in this ſequeſtered ſpot, where ſhe was often viſited by the gentleman for whom ſhe had forfeited her honour. Miſs Delville thought of the ſimilarity of the fates of its former and preſent inhabitant, and ſighed as ſhe entered the kitchen, where the good woman of the houſe was ſpinning. She ſat down beſide her, and telling her that ſhe heard a French lady had taken her lodgings, ſhe aſked her ſeveral queſtions concerning her, calculated to miſlead her into an idea that the lady was a total ſtranger to herſelf.

On enquiring if ſhe could ſee Madame D'Albain, Miſs Delville was informed that at preſent there was a gentleman with her.

" He," continued the goſſip, " as comes here ſo often to viſit the forin lady: I ſuppoſes 'tis a Doctor, for, poor young thing! ſhe bees juſt at the down lying. See, Miſs, there's his horſe faſtened to rail of the little court."

Philippa looked, and ſaw a horſe, which ſhe conceived to be De Melanville's, tied to the green paling; and ſhe now perceived that there were two fronts to the cottage, one of which, being exactly like the common ſort of cabins, contained, on a ſingle floor, the apartments of the family; and the other, whoſe larger caſement windows were ſhaded

with fragrant creepers, and looked into a graſs plat, bordered with flowering ſhrubs, formed the ſimple reſidence of Serena. Two ſmall windows, almoſt concealed in the thatch, and by a large acacia tree that grew in front of the cottage, proclaimed that there was a ſecond ſtory to it, as the little ruſtic porch did that, from the graſs plat, was the entrance.

From hence Miſs Delville now obſerved a gentleman to come, and untying the bridle of the horſe, mount him, and ride away ;— not, however, before ſhe had time to obſerve that it was not De Melanville, but the phyſician who, at the inſtance of Sir Piercy, had viſited Serena at the Caſtle.

The good woman of the houſe now conducted Miſs, as ſhe called Philippa, to the

the parlour of Serena's abode; and ſaying ſhe would tell Mrs. Barton that ſhe wanted to ſee her Lady, went up ſtairs. In a few moments ſhe returned, followed by the ſuppoſed maid of the ſuppoſitious Mrs. Jane Hennington, whoſe profeſſion Miſs Delville could not now miſtake, and who told her that Madame D'Albain would wait on her in a few minutes.

It was a conſiderable time, however, before Miſs Hennington made her appearance, trembling and agitated, and was received into the arms of Philippa, who, in the preſence of this intereſting creature, could remember nothing but her own friendſhip, and her brother's love for the unhappy invalid. Such, Miſs Delville thought, Serena had never ſeemed before, ſo greatly were her

looks altered for the worſe. Her eyes appeared ſunken and hollow; and, by their heavineſs, and the purple tint that coloured her eyelids, betrayed how much ſhe had lately wept; whilſt her ſhape, which ſhe had now taken no pains to diſguiſe, too plainly evinced the truth of the cottager's aſſertion.

"How kind, how generous it is of you," exclaimed Serena, after a ſilence on both ſides, of ſome length, "to intereſt yourſelf about me! Ah! Miſs Delville, how much am I indebted to your noble brother for procuring me the ſolace of your viſits in my unhappy ſituation? But who, except yourſelf, ſo gentle, ſo compaſſionate as Delville?"

"Surely none but a ſavage," returned Philippa, "could be inſenſible to your ſorrows.

rows. And muſt not he who has cauſed them, be the worſt of villains not to try to alleviate them?"

"Ah!" ſaid Serena, "the cauſe of my miſery affords me no conſolation. I have only my own fatal weakneſs, my credulous love, to blame for all I ſuffer."

"Impoſſible, Serena! A ſoul ſo pure, ſo chaſte as your's could not have betrayed *itſelf*. But let us mention the cruel ſubject no more—let us think that you are in reality, what you ſeem to others; and, in the name of Eugenie D'Albain, let every former trait of Serena Hennington be forgotten."

"Can I forget myſelf?" mournfully enquired Serena, while the ſhake of her head,

and the faſt flowing tears that accompanied her words, proved *her* convinced.

"You muſt forget Delville!"

Philippa pronounced this ſentence with downcaſt eyes, as dreading to behold the painful emotions ſhe knew it muſt create.

"Would it were poſſible! Would that I could forget him!—Oh God! why will not my heart burſt, and free me from this cruel bondage of ſpirit and of ſorrow!"

The agony of Serena, as ſhe uttered this impatient exclamation, was almoſt convulſive; and Miſs Delville, terrified by its effect on her delicate frame, after vainly trying every method to ſooth her that ſhe could

could think of, flew to call Mrs. Barton, with whoſe aſſiſtance, when her emotions had ſubſided into a ſort of ſtupor, the invalid was conveyed to bed; and quiet being preſcribed by the good lady, Miſs Delville retired from her chamber, juſt as De Melanville rode up to the door of the cottage.

He did not expreſs any ſurpriſe at meeting her, which ſhe attributed to Delville's having informed him of her intention; but enquired, with anxious ſolicitude, for Serena, of whoſe preſent ſituation, and Mrs. Barton's mandate for quiet, ſhe informed him. The Count then enquired if ſhe was going home; and being anſwered in the affirmative, he offered Miſs Delville his arm, which was accepted; and leading his horſe by the bridle, he proceeded with her along the narrow path towards the Caſtle.

As Miſs Delville had been expreſsly permitted to ſpeak of Serena to De Melanville, that young lady became the ſubject of their converſation during their walk, and the Count ſaid to his companion—

"Since I find you are a viſiter to Madame D'Albain, I conclude that the Chevalier," (ſo the Count always called Delville), "has been more explicit with you than he has been with me concerning her ſtory."

"So far from it," returned Miſs Delville, "that I have been led to believe you were the only perſon entirely in the confidence of my brother and Miſs Hennington."

"I aſſure you, upon my honour," rejoined De Melanville, "that I am totally unacquainted with

with the myſtery which ſo evidently hangs over that young perſon; and to me there ſeems to be but one point on which we have any certainty."

"And that one," ſaid Miſs Delville, concluding he meant her connection with Sir Piercy—"I cannot conceive how it ever exiſted."

"Nor can I," the Count reſumed.—"When firſt I ſaw *la belle Serene*, ſhe appeared in a character ſo different, and ſeemed to have ſo true an idea of its ſacredneſs, that I never ſhould have ſuppoſed ſhe would have ſullied it."

"Did ſhe belong to any religious order?" enquired Philippa.

"No,

"No, Miſs Delville," replied De Melanville, ſmiling.—"A Frenchman can reſpect the character of a *wife*, if women will but ſeem to conſider its dignity."

Miſs Delville felt convicted of a ſomething not unlike illiberality, which is too often one of the conſequences of a ſchool education for females. She had, according to cuſtom, been ſent for ſome years to one of the firſt ſeminaries in England, where it very frequently happens that many of the prejudices of ignorance are found accompanied by the higheſt finiſh of poliſhed information.

In attempting to apologize for one error, Miſs Delville committed a ſecond, by ſaying—

"You

"You then reſpect virtue in proportio to its rarity?"

"Pardon me, Madam, if I ſay that you widely err in ſuppoſing female virtue ſo rare a gem in France (I ſhould rather ſay in what was France); for it is my ſincere belief that in the retired and domeſtic ſcenes of life, it produced fully an equal number of inſtances of the moſt dignified conjugal merit, with England. My countrywomen poſſeſſed too ſincere a veneration for the ſubſtance of virtue, to be over anxious about the ſhadow.—Superior to thoſe prudiſh etiquettes which, an elegant Engliſh Authoreſs, whoſe hiſtory of an Emigrant you received the other day, obſerves, "are * ſuppoſed to be the ſafeguards of female honour, but are in fact

* Mrs. Mary Robinſon, in her Romance of Hubert de Sevrac, in the beginning of the ſecond volume.

mere

mere libels upon true delicacy of ſentiments;" French women indulged themſelves in a thouſand ſallies *folatres*, that Engliſh women would be hunted from ſociety were they to give way to.

"Thoſe who judge from appearances, or hear-ſay, imagine all our women depraved;—but is it in the leaſt wonderful that in a Court where Marie Antoinette preſided, the appearance of virtue was but little attended to, any more than it is that the ſemblance ſhould be ſo tenaciouſly preſerved by thoſe who poſſeſs nothing more in the Britiſh Court, under the eye of one of the moſt rigidly chaſte women in Europe, and where every female muſt naturally feel a wiſh to reſemble her ſweet and innocent daughters, whom beauty has not tainted with vanity, and whoſe

whoſe virtue is uncontaminated by prudery? But ſo little do I conceive that frigid reſerve to be the ſymbol of real purity, that it is my belief, if ever a want of chaſtity ſhould be tolerated by the firſt woman in England, it will ſoon ceaſe to be prized by numbers, who now think it worth the painful taſk of hypocriſy."

The Count then apologized for a digreſſion, which he feared had been tedious to Miſs Delville, and reminded her that they had been ſpeaking of Miſs Hennington.

"True," ſaid Philippa; "though I proteſt I had almoſt forgotten it. But I remember, when I firſt introduced her to you, you ſeemed to have taken her for ſome other perſon."

"Nor

"Nor could I at that time believe," the Count returned, "that Miſs Hennington was the ſame lady whom I had known under another name, and in another character."

"Ah!" exclaimed Miſs Delville, "Serena is then married."

"The Chevalier aſſures me ſhe is not," ſaid De Melanville.

"What then can all this myſtery portend?" reſumed Miſs Delville.—"Where, or when was it that you formerly knew her?"

"At Jamaica; almoſt two years ſince."

"My brother was there at that time;—did you know him?"

"I have

"I have ſeen him in the Weſt Indies."

There was ſomething in the laconic manner in which the Count replied to her queſtions, which convinced Philippa that he knew more concerning the connection of Delville and Serena than he would declare; and as they had juſt then reached the gate, where they muſt ſeparate, for the Count to reach the Caſtle with his horſe, ſhe deſiſted from any farther enquiries, and he, wiſhing her good morning, rode away.

Juſt as Miſs Delville entered the park gate, ſhe was met by Sir Piercy, who eagerly enquired if ſhe had ſeen Serena, and how ſhe was? but hearing of her illneſs, his countenance once more became overclouded, and ſeeming to forget that he was not entirely alone,

alone, he walked on, accompanied by his ſiſter, in total ſilence, till they reached the houſe, when, as they aſcended the ſteps to the hall door, Miſs Delville gently laid her hand upon his ſhoulder, and he ſtopped.

"Has Serena told you her ſtory?" enquired Delville, appearing ſuddenly to recollect himſelf.

"She has not.—Was it her intention ſo to do?"

"Poſitively ſo."

"Then why cannot you," ſaid Philippa, "ſpare her the pain of relating a tale that I fear is but too mournful, by telling it to me yourſelf?"

"No,

"No, my ſiſter, none but her own faſcinating tongue could do a tale, of which ſhe is the heroine, juſtice. Will you not ſee her again ſoon?"

Delville aſked this queſtion with a look, and in a tone ſo ſupplicating, that his ſiſter readily comprehended his thoughts and wiſhes: ſhe had not intended to repeat her viſit till the following day, but ſhe could not bear the idea of keeping her beloved Piercy in a painful ſuſpenſe concerning the ſweet object of his love, that ſhe could poſſibly terminate, and therefore ſaid—

"In the evening, perhaps, you will accompany me to the cottage?"

Delville

Delville affectionately kiſſed her cheek in reply to her propoſal; and De Melanville, who had left his horſe in the ſtable, juſt then joining them, the converſation took a different turn.

At dinner that day Mrs. Powis remarked that it was ſtrange their not having heard from Serena Hennington; adding—

"But probably her old aunt is dead, or dying, and, in that caſe, Piercy (and provided ſhe leaves Serena her fortune), you muſt keep a ſhrewd look out after your fair charge; for ſhe will be an object worthy of much care and conſideration."

"Is ſhe not ſo now, Emily?" demanded Delville with quickneſs.

"Why

"Why, to look at her, and converſe with her, one might ſuppoſe ſo; but if ſhe remains portionleſs for ever, men will prefer being the guardians to a woman ſo beautiful and amiable, to marrying her."

It was impoſſible for Delville to miſunderſtand this ſarcaſtic obſervation of his couſin's, and he felt highly incenſed by it; but juſt as he was going to make a ſharp reply, he encountered a beſeeching glance from Miſs Delville, bit his lips, and was ſilent.

As it was not the cuſtom at Somerſet Caſtle even for the gentlemen to remain long in the parlour after dinner, a ſeparation early took place. Mrs. Powis (whom Sir Piercy uſed often, in gayer times, to diſtinguiſh by the title of the Goddeſs of Indolence), according

according to her uſual habit, retired to the ſofa in the library, to ſleep, till the Count, returning from his evening walk, came to read to her; that gentleman took his cuſtomary ſtroll in the gardens. Delville repaired to his ſtudy, and Philippa to her dreſſing-room, to prepare for her excurſion to the cottage. In a few minutes ſhe had equipped herſelf to encounter the keen breeze of an April evening, and haſtened to join her brother, whom ſhe found in his uſual place in the ſtudy. The day was already cloſing in, but the room was illuminated by a wood fire,

" That uplifts
" The ſhadow to the ceiling, there by fits
" Dancing uncouthly to the quiv'ring flame.
" Such a gloom
" Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind;
" The mind contemplative, with ſome new theme
" Pregnant, or indiſpoſed alike to all."

Miſs

Miſs Delville recollected theſe lines, when ſhe beheld her brother ſeated in what is not unaptly called "the chimney corner." His elbow reſted on the ſurbaſe, aiding his left hand to ſupport his head, whilſt his right arm lay upon the table, the hand only, which held a ſmall volume, hanging over the edge.

He did not at firſt appear to notice Philippa's entering the room, till ſhe approached near enough to take the book, which he ſeemed to have been reading, from his hand. It was Werter; and the page which preſented itſelf was the one giving an account of that laſt diſturbed viſit of Werter to Charlotte, in which he is ſuppoſed finally to have reſolved upon ſuicide.

"That particular part was, in Miſs Del-

ville's eſtimation, the moſt affecting of the whole work, and ſhe could not reſiſt the temptation it offered, but by the light of the fire read it to the end. Sir Piercy's eyes were fixed on her during the whole time, and when ſhe cloſed the book—

"That work does not affect you as it does me," remarked Delville.

"Yet I cannot read it without emotion," returned ſhe; adding, "The feelings of Charlotte (knowing the impetuous paſſions of Werter ſo well as ſhe did) at the time that ſhe ſat down to the harpſichord, impreſs me with a ſtronger idea of their poignancy from the ſilence of the author on the ſubject."

"But

"But thoſe of the unfortunate Werter do not intereſt you ſo deeply?" ſaid Delville.

"They certainly do not. Werter prepared the couch of thorns for himſelf; he made no effort ſeriouſly to overcome his fatal paſſion, and had not generoſity enough to refrain from that vehemence which was detrimental to the peace of the woman he loved.

"Philippa," cried Sir Piercy, in a tone of anguiſh, "you are a ſtranger to the violence of paſſion."

"I thank God, Delville," returned ſhe, "that I am ſo.—The ſtormy emotions of the ſoul inſpire me with terror when I behold

their effects on others, and I rejoice in my exemption from them."

"Yet I am not certain that their pleaſures do not counterbalance their pains," remarked Delville.

"Can you be an admirer of the picture of nature this little volume preſents," enquired Miſs Delville, laying her hand on it, "and yet entertain a doubt on the ſubject?"

"Scarcely," he anſwered.—"Werter, I can never think, was completely miſerable. Even, in the laſt moment of his life, he muſt have felt an emotion of pleaſure, from the idea that Charlotte's attention prepared the inſtrument of death."

What

"What an idea!" exclaimed Miſs Delville.—"Grant that ſuch was the notion of Charlotte when ſhe wiped the duſt from the piſtols of her huſband, was it any proof of the regard which Werter fancied his ſovereign good?"

"Oh was it not ſo?" returned Delville, in an accent of emotion.—"Is it not the higheſt proof of affection to give to the object we love the means of leaving a world where peace can never be their's, though we muſt endure the pain of loſing them?"

Miſs Delville ſhuddered as her brother pronounced theſe words. There was a wildneſs in his air, a vehemence in his manner, that at once explained the ſubject of his meditation when diſturbed by his ſiſter;

and it made her now remind him of the lateneſs of the hour, and entreat him to accompany her to the cottage. He immediately complied; and as Miſs Delville was leaving the room, ſhe contrived to put the volume of Werter, unobſerved, into her pocket, deſigning to prevent it from being the ſtudy of her brother; without reflecting that thoſe paſſages of it that have an evil tendency, had already made their impreſſion on his mind, while thoſe of a contrary nature, with which the work abounds, had probably never drawn his obſervation.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

IT was almoſt entirely dark when Delville and his ſiſter reached the habitation of Serena; and without ſtopping at the apartment of the cottager's family, they walked round to the little graſs plat fronting the windows of her abode. A light gleamed from the window of her chamber, but the room below was gloomy and ſolitary. They entered it, however; and Miſs Delville, requeſting Sir Piercy to wait there till ſhe had ſeen Serena, aſcended the ſtairs without making any noiſe. As the apartment was

ſmall and cloſe, the door had been left ajar for air, and Philippa perceived within every appearance of a ſick room. Diſtreſſed at this obſervation, ſhe advanced ſoftly to Mrs. Barton, who was ſitting by the fire, and, to her infinite aſtoniſhment, ſhe beheld a lovely infant faſt aſleep, lying on her lap.

Miſs Delville ſtarted; but as ſhe could not well miſunderſtand this circumſtance, ſhe made no enquiries, but dropping on her knees beſide the good woman, fervently preſſed her lips to the ſoft cheek of the baby, and whiſpered a bleſſing on its innocent head. She then aſked how long it had been born, and how the mother was?

"Little maſter came into the world about three hours after you were here this morning,"

morning," replied Mrs. Barton; "and Madame, though for that time in extreme danger, is now much better than, from her delicate ſtate of health, could be expected."

At this moment Miſs Delville heard Serena ſigh heavily, and going to the bed-ſide, undrew one of the curtains. The light of the taper, that was burning on the chimney-piece, ſhone full on the pale face of the invalid; and the ſweet ſmile that ſtole over it, ſpoke her grateful pleaſure in the ſight of Philippa.

She beckoned to Mrs. Barton, who brought the child over to her; ſhe feebly graſped the hand of her friend, ſaying, in a voice ſcarcely audible—

"Philippa! I may never ſee you more, and I feel that my laſt farewel has been taken of Delville! Oh then ſee you that my child is put under his protection, and tell him it was my laſt entreaty, my lateſt prayer, that he would never abandon it: conjure him, if ever I was the object of his affection or his pity, not to forſake my child!"

The exertion of ſpeaking, together with her emotion, was too much for the feeble Serena; and though ſhe did not abſolutely faint, ſhe became nearly inſenſible.—Miſs Delville ſnatched the baby from the arms of Mrs. Barton, and preſſed it fondly to her heart, which throbbed with compaſſionate ſorrow; and mindful of the entreaty of Serena to commit her infant to Sir Piercy's care, inſtantly carried it down ſtairs

to the lower room, where he ſtill remained, and whither candles had been brought by the ſervant.

He was ſitting in a contemplative poſture, with his hand ſhading his eyes; and it was not till Miſs Delville ſpoke that (though he heard her enter the room) he perceived the lovely burthen that ſhe held in her arms.

He ſtarted from his ſeat, and met his ſiſter in the middle of the apartment. The ſight of the child evidently and violently affected him; he ſeemed ſcarcely able to ſupport himſelf, but reſting his hand on the ſhoulder of Miſs Delville, as he bent over the ſleeping baby, tears, that ſeemed the offspring of the moſt acute anguiſh, fell from his eyes on its face.

It was very ſeldom that Sir Piercy had been ſeen by his ſiſter to ſhed tears; and they now gave her the ſame alarm, that violent hyſteric ſorrow, unaccompanied by them, would do in a woman. She tried to ſooth his emotions; and having in part ſucceeded, repeated to him the injunction of Serena. For ſome moments he ſtruggled vainly to ſpeak.

"Yes, Philippa!" cried he at length, "I ſwear before you, and to you, that let what will be the deſtiny of its mother, ſhe ſhall be religiouſly obeyed. Aſſure my angelic Serena that every tender claim of a child on its parent ſhall be ſacred to me in favour of the poor little one. To the beſt of my ability I will diſcharge every duty towards it whilſt I live; and in dying, I will commend it to my father."

As

As he concluded theſe words, Sir Piercy tenderly kiſſed the infant. His emotion ſoon ſubſided into his habitual melancholy; and in this temper he accompanied Miſs Delville (as ſoon as ſhe had left the baby with Mrs. Barton, and taken leave of Serena) on her way homewards.

By the time that they emerged from the ſhady path that led from the cottage to the mill, the moon, which was not yet near full, had riſen from behind the hill that ſheltered Serena's habitation from the eaſt wind; which now ſweeping the ſurface of the pool, and ruffling its uſual glaſſy ſmoothneſs, lent a brilliancy to the reflection of the moon, that gave the water the appearance of being covered with ſparkling cryſtals, and whiſtled in the branches of ſome large beech-trees, on

on which ſcarcely any appearance of foliage could yet be diſcerned. Miſs Delville, who leant on her brother's arm, ſtopped, though ſhe felt chilled by the blaſt, and obſerved to him the unuſual ſplendour of the moonlight.

"Its brilliancy," he returned, "together with the keenneſs of the air, reminds me of thoſe northern climates where ſo much of my time has been already ſpent, and where I *now* think my exiſtence will terminate."

"Wherefore do you particularly *now* entertain ſuch an idea?" demanded Miſs Delville.

"Becauſe," he anſwered, "this evening has fixed my determination to bid a final adieu

adieu to England; and though all other countries are alike open to me, I naturally prefer that where my paſt ſervices will obtain for me an immediate and active command."

"What then," ſaid Philippa, "is to become of the little creature whom only half an hour ſince you ſwore to cheriſh and protect?"

"It will be ſafe under the protection of Lord Somerſet. Before I go hence, I ſhall make him acquainted with its claims on him; but it is the exiſtence of that little being that will drive me from my country, and my hoped-for happineſs."

Miſs Delville begged him to explain himſelf, but was anſwered with his uſual "I cannot."

cannot," as he reſumed his pace, and led her forwards. During the remainder of their walk, Philippa ruminated on what ſhe had learned from her brother, and in vain ſought to diſcover his motive for abſenting himſelf from England and from Serena, on account of the birth of the child; and they entered the library together, whilſt ſhe was yet buſy with conjectures.

Mrs. Powis and the Count were as uſual occupied by their ſtudies, but this evening the former was the reader; and while her auditor flew to reach a chair for Miſs Delville, pauſed to remark that her walk had been unuſually ſhort that evening.

De Melanville heard the obſervation, and ſaid—

"So

"So very much the reverſe has it appeared to me, that for above half an hour I could ſcarcely pay any attention to what *la belle couſine* has been reading, from watching to hear the opening of the door announce the return of my lovely friend."

Mrs. Powis, with an air of affected pique, which too much reſembled reality to eſcape the obſervation of the company, congratulated him upon his abjuration of the frothy gallantry that uſed to diſtinguiſh his countrymen. He anſwered her reproach with a compliment which reſtored him to favour, and, at the requeſt of Miſs Delville, the book was reſumed.

The Count was, like ſome other intelligent foreigners, an admirer of Engliſh Novels

of

of the ſuperior order; and, at his requeſt, Mrs. Powis had begun, and had now nearly concluded the reading of Charlotte Smith's Emmeline to him. She had juſt commenced Lady Adelina's letter to Fitz-Edward, in the cloſe of the laſt volume, when her couſins' entering the library interrupted her, and ſhe now reſumed it. Miſs Delville attended to it with more ſerioufneſs than ſhe had ever done before, becauſe the ſubject was at this moment peculiarly intereſting; and ſhe was not long at a loſs to account for Sir Piercy's determination to leave England.

At even an earlier hour than ſhe had done the preceding day, Miſs Delville the next morning haſtened to the dwelling of Serena, whom ſhe found much better than ſhe had

dared

dared even to hope. No longer, to appearance, ſunk in the apathy of deſpair, ſhe ſeemed, in her infant, to have acquired an intereſt in living, and ſuckling it was her principal delight; but ſhe was not by any means inſenſible to the kindneſs of Philippa, who, from viſiting her only early in the morning, and late in the evening, ſoon ſpent almoſt her whole time with her: but Delville, though he more than once aſked permiſſion to ſee her, was ſtill excluded from her preſence.

"Conjure him," ſaid Serena, one day when Miſs Delville had repeated his requeſt, "to give up this point, ſince I never can oblige him. He knows my whole heart! He feels how ſeverely I have ſuffered for its paſt weakneſs, and it is almoſt cruel in him

to

to wiſh to renew the anguiſh which has already torn every fibre of my heart."

As Serena ſaid this, ſhe burſt into a paſſionate flood of tears, ſuch as uſually attended the mention of Delville in her preſence; and though Philippa ardently wiſhed at this moment to hear her whole ſtory, ſhe could not aſk her to relate it. Several times had the unhappy girl begun the relation; but her emotions had always interrupted it, and Miſs Delville was ſtill totally in the dark reſpecting the paſt events of her life.

In the meantime, the little Piercy became inconceivably dear to the gentle heart of Philippa; ſhe would hold him in her arms for hours, and gazing on his unformed features, would endeavour to trace a likeneſs in

in them to thoſe of her brother, but in vain; ſince in the only one, that in infants is at all marked, there was an eſſential difference.—The eyes of the child were of the cleareſt azure, and its eyebrows tending to auburn, while thoſe of Sir Piercy were as nearly black as are ever ſeen.

Sir Piercy now took a ſudden reſolution of immediately joining Lord Somerſet in London, previous, as he in confidence informed his ſiſter, to his ſetting out for Carlſcrona, in order, as was now his fixed determination, again to embark in the Swediſh Navy. But before he ſet out, by the moſt ardent entreaties, and through the mediation of Miſs Delville, he obtained leave once more to viſit his adored Serena; and the evening of her birth-day, which was in the middle

middle of May, was appointed for their laſt meeting.

The ſpring had this year been uncommonly wet, and, on the memorable evening now mentioned, a ſort of drizzling rain, which had fallen almoſt through the whole day, made Serena and Miſs Delville (who arrived at the cottage before her brother) draw the tea-table cloſe to a blazing fire of wood, and though it was yet too early for the light to have forſaken the ſky, call for candles, and let down the curtains of the windows, one of which, however, that ſerved as a door, being left open to admit the entrance of Sir Piercy.

During the whole day, the little boy had been ſick and feveriſh--his mother fancied from

from taking the infection of the ſmall-pox; and ſhe had juſt retired with him in her arms, to put him to bed, and left Miſs Delville alone, when that young lady was firſt alarmed by a knocking with a cane or whip on the glaſs door of the cottage, and then by the entrance of a ſtrange gentleman.

Seeing the ſurpriſe of Miſs Delville, he apologized in a hurried, though polite manner, for his intruſion, adding—

"I am informed, Madam, that this is the reſidence of Mrs. Delamain."

Philippa inſtantly recollected that to have been the name of its laſt inhabitant, and ſaid—

"That

"That ſome time ſince it was ſo, Sir, is, I believe, very true; but let me aſſure you that at preſent no ſuch perſon is in this neighbourhood."

"It is probable, Madam," returned the ſtranger, "that *you* know her not by the name of Delamain, as I underſtand ſhe calls herſelf Eugenie D'Albain, and a French Emigrant."

There was a ſomething of *bruſquerie* in the manner of the ſtranger, that excited the curioſity of Miſs Delville, even more than his words or appearance, which ſhe now attentively examined, and tried to recollect if ſhe had before ſeen him.

His perſon was of the middle height, well-formed, and ſingularly elegant, and his face perfectly

perfectly handſome. From the almoſt total deficiency of hair on his head, and the whiteneſs of what little there was, he might be ſuppoſed rather in the decline of life, had not the clearneſs of his ſoft blue eyes, and the dazzling whiteneſs of his teeth, proved that he had yet ſcarcely reached its meridian.—His voice was harmonious, and, in his whole exterior, *gentleman* was imprinted too plainly to be miſtaken. He ſeemed, however, much agitated, and ſeveral times paced the room up and down, unmindful either of Miſs Delville's aſſurances that Mrs. Delamain was not under that roof, or of her invitations to him to be ſeated.

About five minutes had elapſed ſince his entrance, and ſhewed him not in the leaſt diſpoſed to depart, when his *téte-à-téte* with

Philippa was interrupted by the coming in of Delville.

Sir Piercy's eyes ſtruck fire as he perceived the ſtranger. The pale traces of melancholy vaniſhed from his countenance, and only the indignant fluſh of anger was ſeen there; and after a ſingle glance at the intruder, which ſeemed to convey volumes of expreſſion, he addreſſed his ſiſter, ſaying—

"Philippa, do you know who is this courteous Knight?"

"No," whiſpered Miſs Delville, alarmed at the evident deſign to inſult the ſtranger diſplayed by Sir Piercy. But hoſtile intentions now proved to be mutual; for the ſtranger, quickly turning round, ſaid haughtily—

"My

"My name is Henry Delamain, and it is not borne by a coward."

"I ſhall not take the word of a villain for his own courage," returned Delville, with affected careleſſneſs, but with a look of bitterneſs and indignation.

"I am ready to engrave it on your perſon with any inſtrument you pleaſe," returned Mr. Delamain, with the moſt provoking coolneſs, and continuing to traverſe the room to and fro.

"Then I ſhould counſel you to go and prepare yourſelf," cried Delville, ſtill endeavouring to affect calmneſs.

"There is no occaſion," replied his opponent.—"Whilſt I wear this dreſs," glan-

cing at his uniform, "I am always prepared for the chaſtiſement of inſolence."

"Will you oblige me, Sir," ſaid Delville, angrily, "to deſire you may inſtantly go about your buſineſs?"

"My buſineſs, Sir, is with my wife," anſwered the impenetrable intruder.

"*Which* of your wives, Mr. Delamain?"

"My *only* wife, Sir Piercy Delville! She who was once Serena Hennington."

"Take care, Sir," ſaid Delville, ſternly; "you muſt not preſume to mention that lady in the preſence of her guardian."

"And

"And pray, Sir," rejoined Mr. Delamain, bowing ſarcaſtically, "who made *you* the guardian of Mrs. Delamain?"

"He whoſe laſt moments *your* baſeneſs embittered—he whoſe ſiſter you *twice* wantonly betrayed—that George Hennington who once honoured you with his friendſhip, but whoſe injured ſpirit will aid the avenging arm of one who revered, loved, and pitied him!"

Sir Piercy's, like all warm and impetuous natures, was eaſily ſoftened by tenderneſs; and the recollection of his friend made him pronounce the laſt ſentence in a tone of more feeling than anger.

Miſs Delville thought this the moment when her interference was likely to prove

ſucceſsful. She entreated them both to be pacified, and not to alarm the unhappy ſubject of their altercation by their vehemence. She particularly addreſſed herſelf to Mr. Delamain; but turned from him with diſguſt, when, with the eaſieſt air imaginable, he began to pay her the moſt inſinuating compliments on her perſuaſive powers.

Juſt at that moment Serena, who had been diſturbed by the hum of mingling voices below ſtairs, opened the door of the parlour; but unable to advance, ſhe could only lean againſt it, and gaze fixedly upon Delville and Delamain alternately.

Miſs Delville approached her, and though unable to comprehend the ſcene that had juſt paſſed, clearly underſtanding that

that this could be no proper place for Serena, requeſted her to retire; at the ſame time ſhe dared not offer to accompany her, as that muſt leave the gentlemen entirely unreſtrained.

Her voice rouſed Serena from the torpor of aſtoniſhment; and inſtead of retreating, ſhe advanced to the ſtranger, ſaying, with an air of reſentful dignity—

"How comes it, Mr. Delamain, that I ſee you here?"

"Can you be ſurpriſed, Serena, that were you even to conceal yourſelf in the bowels of the earth, I ſhould purſue the ſearch till I found you out?"

"True, Sir.—I have already had proof how perſevering is your cruelty! But what is your preſent object?"

"To prove to you that I am wholly your's, and to oblige you to own yourſelf mine," anſwered he.

"Your's, Mr. Delamain! your's!—Oh never!"

"Serena, I can ſubſtantiate my claim," returned Delamain. "But," added he, "why do I ſpeak to my wife in the preſence of theſe two perſons? Come, my love, you ſhall preſent me to my little boy."

An inſidious ſmile accompanied his words, and he put his arm round her waiſt; but

Serena,

Serena, ſhrieking, ſtarted away with the ſame horror ſhe would have done, had a ſerpent entwined her in its folds. Regardleſs of the terror ſhe manifeſted, Mr. Delamain would have taken her in his arms to carry her up ſtairs; but Sir Piercy darted forwards, and ſeizing him by the collar, threw him, with conſiderable violence, againſt the oppoſite ſide of the room; at the ſame time offering his aſſiſtance to the trembling Serena, who, after two or three quick ſhrill ſcreams, ſunk ſenſeleſs on the floor.

Philippa, in an agony of terror, flew to raiſe her; whilſt Delville, as if bewildered by the circumſtances that had occurred, ſtood beſide her, gazing on the inanimate object of his fondeſt affections with a ſort

of ſtoical apathy, which was the effect of feelings too highly ſtrained to give emotion vent.

As ſoon as Mr. Delamain a little recovered from the ſtunning effects of the rough treatment he had met with, he advanced to the little group, no longer the ſmiling, inſolent Delamain, but pride, ſhame, and ſorrow mingling in his fine features, and agitating him too much even for reſentment againſt Sir Piercy, who, in the moment that he knelt beſide Serena, threw himſelf alſo on his knees, and almoſt unconſcious of what he was doing, gave him a violent blow, whilſt he raiſed the drooping head of Serena to his boſom.

Delamain

Delamain ſtarted at this ſecond outrage; but compunction reigned in his heart, and made him humble.

"Even this repeated inſult, Delville, I can bear," cried he.—"I feel that you are the worthy protector of the angel I ſo cruelly injured; but do not, when repentant, conſign me to everlaſting miſery. Suffer me to atone for the wrongs I have committed, and be my friend."

Delville was moved; he felt indignant at his own want of ſelf-command, and gladly would he have expiated, with his life, the blow he had given, but his whole ſoul revolted againſt Delamain, and he replied—

"Friendſhip, Mr. Delamain, is not for us. I am ready to give you any ſatisfaction

you pleaſe for the inſult I have offered you; but to take to my heart the deſtroyer of the peace, the honour, almoſt the exiſtence of the woman I adore, is not for a ſpirit like mine. Everlaſtingly you will find me your foe! The power veſted in me by my unfortunate friend, I ſhall ever exert, to divide you from the ſweet victim of your perfidy. His expiring entreaties, to be mindful of her honour and happineſs, ſhall be attended to; and while I live, I will defend them."

The haughty ſpirit of Delville flaſhed from his eyes as he ſpoke, and his frame trembled with emotion; but a ſpirit as proud, though not ſo fiery as his own, was rouſed in Delamain, and he angrily demanded that his child ſhould be given up to him.

"The

"The child!" repeated Serena, wildly, diſtinguiſhing (though not yet perfectly ſenſible) that word only—"Delville has promiſed to protect and be a parent to it."

"I did, my love, my Serena!" cried Delville, fondly raiſing her to a ſeat, whilſt Miſs Delville held and chafed her hands, "and I never will forfeit my word."

"You *muſt*, Sir," returned Mr. Delamain, enraged.—"You ſhall not deprive me of my ſon, or of the woman I love.—Voluntarily ſhe became my wife, and I will never give up my claim."

"Is it for you, Sir, to advance that claim?" cried Delville, indignantly.—"Do you forget that, at the time when you ſtole

the affections, and received the vows of Miſs Hennington, your own were already plighted to another? Has it totally eſcaped your memory, that no other than Honora Seward ever had a legal claim to the title of Mrs. Delamain?"

"Accurſed to all time," exclaimed the almoſt frenzied Delamain, "be the hour that united me to infamy! But our engagements are for ever diſſolved, and Serena ſhall in reality be my wife."

"Never, never, Mr. Delamain," ſaid that young lady, with renovated reſolution.—"Never can I honour a man who could profeſs to love, yet do me the cruelleſt injuries. Severe has been the penance I have undergone for my weak attachment to you.—

The

The beſt of men, and moſt beloved of brothers, I have ſeen, broken-hearted by the conſideration of his outraged honour, borne to the grave. Perſecution and diſgrace I have ſuffered! Deſpair and ſorrow have taken everlaſting root in my heart; and think you that I will now meanly conſent to unite myſelf to the man who has ſo baſely betrayed my confidence, and broken my peace?—No, Sir; I can now be thankful to you for your deceptions, and rejoice that I never was your wife, at the ſame time that I declare my irrevocable reſolution never to endow you with any power over me. The love I once felt for you is loſt."

"In your attachment to another!" interrupted Mr. Delamain, in a tone of impatient reſentment.

The firmneſs which Serena had, with ſo much difficulty, acquired, ſeemed, for a moment, to be ſhaken by this inſinuation; but her mind, naturally ſtrong, and now rouſed from the lethargy of grief that had ſo long obſcured its faculties, yielded not to the perplexities of her deſtiny.

"No, Sir," ſhe replied, "not in my attachment to another, but in my juſt indignation at the mean barbarity of your conduct towards me. Had you been contented with one ſacrifice of my honour, I could have forgiven, and perhaps loved you ſtill; but when your baſeneſs was reiterated, when I found myſelf a ſecond time deceived and betrayed, it was not for the ſiſter of the abuſed, the indignant Hennington to feel for you any ſentiment but deteſtation!

"If

"If I have ſince," and the pale countenance of the lovely Serena was ſuffuſed with a faint glow, and her eyes mechanically were turned from him to whom, as well as him of whom ſhe ſpoke—" if I have ſince, to the noble friend of my unfortunate brother, the champion of my innocence, the faithful guardian of the ſecret of my weakneſs, given all the animated tenderneſs of which my heart is capable, it was not the cauſe, but the conſequence of its total eſtrangement from you. But there too, Sir, have you blighted every promiſe of happineſs, or even of peace for the ſoul of your victim; for every throb of affection that I feel at my heart, for the moſt deſerving of men, wrings it with ſeverer anguiſh than any conſideration of poverty, of my deſtitute ſtate, or my blaſted reputation."

Serena

Serena pauſed, and the emotions of her auditors being nearly equal to her own, allowed them not to break ſilence till, recovering the ſuſpended powers of ſpeech—

"Oh Delville!" ſhe reſumed, in a tone of tender ſupplication, and the moſt engaging modeſty in her countenance and action, as ſhe timidly took his hand—"dear, ineſtimable Delville, can you forgive the wretched Serena for being the ſource of unhappineſs to you—of unhappineſs which deſtiny forbids even her efforts to remove?—Withdraw from me that fond and generous attachment, of which it has been the unconſcious ſolace of my life for thoſe laſt ſad ſix months, to note the progreſs. Baniſh from your heart every thought of me; or I think I could endure that you ſhould deteſt

me,

me, could it reſtore your peace of mind. Think of me only as a mother, without the title of a wife, and feeling for her offspring only the inſtinctive kindneſs of duty; think of me——"

"It is well done, Madam," interrupted Mr. Delamain, his native haughtineſs flushing his countenance, and but ill ſeconding his profeſſion of penitence—"it is well done, Madam, to receive a man, who comes to prove repentance of his errors, with revilings of himſelf, and profeſſions of tenderneſs for another! But for your child, that child, which, for its father's ſake, it ſeems is hateful to you, of it I ſhall take charge!"

Had not Mr. Delamain mentioned his deſign of taking the little Piercy from his mother,

mother, it is probable that he might long have ſpoken without obtaining any great degree of attention to his words, either from the perſon to whom they were addreſſed, or any other. Delville, a prey to feelings naturally ſtrong, and awakened to agony by the contention of emotions which the paſſing events, and the conduct of Serena had given birth to, had thrown himſelf into a chair, and leaned his throbbing temples againſt the boſom of his ſiſter, whoſe arms encircled his neck; while Serena, whoſe expreſſive countenance ſhewed the anguiſh of mind ſhe endured, ſtill held his hand, and gazed on his features with a mixture of tenderneſs and ſorrow in her own, unſpeakably affecting.

Her child was, notwithſtanding ſhe reproached herſelf for not loving it ſufficiently,

inexpreſſibly

inexpreſſibly dear to her. It was true that ſhe felt not for it the enthuſiaſtic fondneſs ſhe would probably have done, had ſhe been able to conſider it as an additional bond of affection to a man whom ſhe loved: it was, on the contrary, a painful memorial of thoſe injuries ſhe had endured from its father, and an inſurmountable barrier, which her cruel deſtiny had reared between her and Delville, whom ſhe adored, as his merit deſerved.—But no ſooner did Delamain mention a ſeparation from it, than ſhe forgot every thing but her maternal fondneſs; and having in vain employed every other means of detaching him from his cruel purpoſe, ſhe even deſcended to entreaty, and conjured him to ſuffer her infant to remain with her during the ſhort ſpace that ſorrow ſeemed to allot for the meaſure of her days."

Mr.

Mr. Delamain was not inhuman in his nature; he could not reſiſt the fair pleader, whom he promiſed ſhould retain her child, on condition that ſhe conſented to ſee him in the morning, in hopes ſhe might then more favourably incline to the gratification of his wiſhes. Having obtained this promiſe, he was leaving the cottage, when he perceived the ſituation of the wretched Delville, who ſtill ſat ſupported by his ſiſter, his whole appearance ſtrongly marking the tumult of emotions that raged in his boſom; and his heart ſmote him for the diſtreſs of which he had been the cauſe. He advanced to Delville, and taking his hand—

"Sir Piercy," ſaid he, "we are rivals, I find, but we ſhould be friends. Believe me, I know how to eſtimate thoſe virtues which I can-

I cannot practiſe. I know, I feel how ſtrong muſt be your influence in the mind of my Serena, but I am not abject enough to deſire you to employ it in my favour; I ſhall content myſelf with reſting it on your honour to make no attempts to induce her to revoke the promiſe, on which I build all my hopes of returning peace."

"Nor ſhall you find your confidence in me miſplaced," cried Delville, ſtarting from his ſeat, and, with evident agitation in his air, hurrying Delamain from the room.—"I will depart with you."

"Hold, for pity's ſake!" exclaimed Serena and Miſs Delville at once, both endeavouring to detain the gentlemen.

"What

"What do you mean, Philippa?" ſaid Delville, pauſing on the threſhold, and turning to his ſiſter.

"That you muſt not go with Mr. Delamain; that you muſt go home with me! Only think," ſhe added, in breathleſs terror, "how I am to get home by myſelf ſuch a night as this!"

"Permit me, Madam," ſaid Delamain, with all the inſinuating grace that ſeemed natural to him, to have the honour of aſſiſting Sir Piercy in the enviable office of your protector."

Philippa ſhrunk with abhorrence from the ſmiling ſubtilty that dictated his offer of protection, and maſked, with deepeſt diſſimulation, the intentions hoſtile to her repoſe, excited by the words of Delville, and

which

which he meant not to forego: but Serena, now the moſt compoſed of the whole party, flew to fetch a long cloak from the table, where her friend had, on her arrival at the cottage, placed it, and aſſiſting her to put it on, begged ſhe would not remain longer from home, leſt the night ſhould become more unpropitious; and Philippa, perfectly underſtanding her, took the arm of her brother, and wiſhing her a good night, departed, followed by Mr. Delamain.

Thus left alone, the hapleſs Serena, agitated by the paſt, and trembling at her anticipation of the future, inſtead of retiring to her bed, or even to the ſide of that where lay her child, remained in the parlour liſtening to the receding footſteps of her viſiters for ſome moments, and then ſallied

into the little graſſy court, to hear them more diſtinctly. The night was now fair, and the moon beamed faintly through the foliage, that, heavy with rain drops, hung over the roof of the cottage.—The mild luſtre of that beautiful planet ſeemed to have a ſoothing influence over the perturbed mind of Serena; and totally indifferent to the wetneſs of the ground, ſhe continued to walk to and fro in the court for near an hour, when the feeble cry of her infant reminded her of the neceſſity of attending to it, which ſhe inſtantly did; but not before ſhe had caught ſo ſevere a cold as threatened the worſt conſequences.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

IN total ſilence did the trio, on their departure from the cottage, proceed till they reached the park gate of Somerſet Caſtle.—Mr. Delamain there bade his companions good night; and as he was going from them, Sir Piercy made a ſudden attempt to ſtep after him; but, by a ſort of gentle violence, was detained by Philippa, till Delamain, having diſappeared, he ſilently gave up the point, and proceeded with her to the Caſtle. It was not till they were about to enter, that Miſs Delville, breaking through the long

ſilence, aſked her brother if ſhe might not now be informed of the particulars of Serena's diſaſtrous and eventful hiſtory.

"Not immediately *now*," replied Delville, "To-morrow—yes, to-morrow you ſhall know all! There may then be other events to communicate."

Miſs Delville would have demanded his meaning, had he not, at that moment, opened the library door, and thus prevented her, by himſelf going into the room, whither, as the Count de Melanville was walking up and down the room, and had ſeen her, ſhe was obliged to follow. She advanced to the table where Mrs. Powis was ſitting; and notwithſtanding Philippa was not in preciſely the frame of mind to take much notice

notice of any thing, ſhe could not help obſerving her couſin's countenance to wear an air of thoughtfulneſs and even gloom, very unuſual to it. Neither, however, ſpoke, and Miſs Delville ſeated herſelf near the fire. On the table lay a bouquet of fine ſpring flowers, their ſtalks bound up with the back of a letter, addreſſed to the Chevalier de Moldine, for ſuch (except in the Caſtle) was the name De Melanville ſtill bore. As both the fair couſins were fond of flowers, but ſeldom went in ſearch of them, it had often been the amuſement of the Count, during his evening rambles in the gardens, to ſelect and bring them in, to lay on the work-table of the ladies. Concluding thoſe had been placed there by him, Miſs Delville took them up, and ſelecting a jonquil from the reſt, put it in her boſom. Mrs.

Powis obſerved the action, and exclaimed, half peeviſhly—

"Lord, Philippa, how can you endure the ſmell of jonquils? I proteſt they are quite too powerful for me!"

And as ſhe ſpoke, ſhe ſeized the unoffending bouquet, and flung it to the fartheſt corner of the room.

Miſs Delville felt hurt at the *bruſquerie* of her couſin, which ſeemed to ſhew a ſlight to the Count; and being ever of the number of the peace-makers, ſhe very quietly went to the place where the noſegay had fallen, and picked it from the floor. The Count, who ſaw what ſhe was about, though he had not obſerved the diſgrace of the flowers,

flowers, flew to prevent her ſtooping; but was in time only to make Philippa bluſh the deepeſt crimſon, as ſhe diſcovered how much the bouquet had ſuffered. Moſt of the bells were broken from the hyacinths, of which it was partly compoſed, and were ſcattered on the floor; but ſhe gathered them all up, and calling for a glaſs of water, placed the remaining ſtems in it on the mantle-piece.

This little trait of attentive kindneſs in her couſin, did not eſcape the fair widow;—it made her both ſigh and bluſh. Philippa thought there was reaſon for the latter; but for the former ſhe could not account, though ſhe echoed it back from her own heart.

At a very early hour, which the taciturnity of the whole party made them think very much the reverſe, they all retired to their reſpective apartments, where, whilſt they remain, it may not be amiſs to relate ſome family circumſtances, that may tend to illuſtrate the events, or (more properly ſpeaking) the diſputes of the foregoing chapter.

The parents of Honora Seward were well born, and well educated, but indigent and ambitious; and to the two latter circumſtances it is moſt probable their only child owed her unhappineſs and ſubſequent diſgrace. Mrs. Seward, who was an elegant and highly accompliſhed woman, early began to train her daughter in thoſe purſuits that would be moſt likely to promote her favourite

favourite plan—that of marrying her advantageously; and as the young Honora had native taste and genius, together with a docile disposition, her exterior, though extremely beautiful, was, at fourteen, in the eyes of all her friends, but the casket which contained a gem of yet superior worth and brilliancy.

What Honora might have been, had her destiny been different from what it was, it were needless to describe—what she really was, painful.

In the earliest dawn of childhood, Miss Seward had a playfellow, whom she loved with the fondest affection, and whose tenderness for her, as her's for him, grew up with them both, and assumed the form of love,

at a period of both their lives when that paſſion takes the deepeſt hold on the human heart: in William Oſborne's at leaſt it did. This youth, who was almoſt ſix years older than Honora, was the heir of a modeſt independence, which would have been amply competent to the indulgence of his every wiſh, had he not, whilſt Honora was yet a child, and himſelf little more, marked the ambitious views of Mr. and Mrs. Seward for their daughter, and deſpaired of her being ſuffered to liſten to propoſals from one of ſo moderate expectations as himſelf.

With a prudence very remarkable in ſo young a man, William was extremely careful never to give to Honora the ſlighteſt hint of the nature of his ſentiments for her; and even when, before ſhe had entered her

ſixteenth

ſixteenth year, he ſaw her on the point of marriage with the affluent Mr. Delamain, he had reſolution to conceal his bitter diſappointment from her: nor did he breathe one word that could put her upon an examination of what her own feelings were towards him.

Mr. Delamain, however (than whom few men poſſeſſed a greater ſhare of penetration), almoſt with a glance made himſelf maſter of the ſecret of young Oſborne; but as he did not perceive any ſign of a participation of it on the part of Honora, he was ſatisfied; and immediately after their marriage, took her with him to the metropolis. Here, ſurrounded by ſplendour, admired, and indulged, the giddy Honora embarked on the ocean of the gay world, with every thing neceſſary

(except a ſkilful pilot) to render her an honour to all thoſe connected with her.

When Mrs. Delamain was about twelve years old, ſhe had, as moſt girls are apt to do with thoſe for whom they have an affection, exchanged a lock of her hair with William Oſborne for one of his; and a ſhort time after her going to London, on removing the contents from her old pocket-book, into a ſplendid new one, given her by Mr. Delamain, ſhe found this lock of hair, and reſolved to beſtow on it ſome mark of the affection ſhe felt for its former owner. Notwithſtanding ſhe had a childiſh paſſion for ornaments, her huſband had preſented her ſuch a number, that it was a matter of ſome conſideration to diſcover any one ſhape in which it was poſſible to form

form a trinket in which to ſet William's hair, that would not be ſimilar to ſome ſhe already poſſeſſed. At length a ring was reſolved on; and as this train of meditation, and the circumſtance that cauſed it, had occurred during the intervening time between her making tea for breakfaſt, and Mr. Delamain coming to partake of it, ſhe hurried over the meal with all poſſible expedition, and ordered the carriage.

"And let the coachman make haſte," added Mrs. Delamain, when ſhe gave her orders to the footman. She was then haſtening from the room, when Mr. Delamain caught hold of her hand, and was drawing her down on his knee, as was his frequent cuſtom; but ſhe entreated him not to detain her, as ſhe was in the greateſt of all poſſible hurries.

"And

"And what to do, my love?" enquired her huſband.

"No matter," anſwered Honora, haſtily.

Mr. Delamain liked to be treated with reſpect by his wife, though he often played childiſhly with her himſelf; and he thought her preſent behaviour rather unceremonious: a cloud ſtole over his expreſſive countenance; but as he no longer attempted to withhold her from going, Honora left the room without noticing his diſpleaſure.

In a few days Mrs. Delamain procured the ring from the jeweller who had made it. It was done by her own directions, and extremely elegant—a large braid of hair ſurrounded

rounded with brilliants, and the initials W.O. in brilliants alſo. Notwithſtanding it was only the day before that Mr. Delamain expreſſed his diſapprobation of the number of ornaments uſually worn by his wife, ſhe no ſooner received this, than ſhe put it on her finger with artleſs exultation in its beauty.

Admiring her ring as ſhe did herſelf, it might be imagined that Honora would derive pleaſure from ſeeing the eyes of her huſband fixed on it the whole time they were at dinner; inſtead of which, it gave her a ſenſation of uneaſineſs, and ſhe took an opportunity, when the ſcrutiny of his gaze appeared for a moment relaxed, to pull off the ring, and depoſit it in her pocket.—Mr. Delamain did not think proper to notice

notice this action; but when the cloth was removed, and the ſervants withdrawn, he deſired to ſee her new ring. Honora, bluſhing deeply, at firſt pretended not to underſtand him, but at length produced the trinket in queſtion; and though the ſullen ſternneſs of her huſband's manner made her (fearing, ſhe knew not why, his diſpleaſure) prevaricate a little to the queſtion of whoſe the hair was, ſhe at length owned that it belonged to William Oſborne. Mr. Delamain, with an increaſing air of ſullenneſs, then, without repreſenting to his innocent and thoughtleſs wife the impropriety of her wearing the ring, abruptly commanded that ſhe might not again put it on.

"In that caſe," ſaid Honora, with a diſappointed look, "I might as well not have had it made."

"I am

"I am perfectly of your opinion," replied her husband; "nor can I see that you have any business whatever with that young fellow's hair."

A thought darted across the mind of Mrs. Delamain: she had heard that a jealous husband was no phenomenon in the world, and instantly decided that Mr. Delamain was jealous. In this conviction she formed a sudden resolution to sacrifice every thing to restore his quiet. This was, however, no more than to return to young Osborne his hair, at the same time informing him that Mr. Delamain was displeased at finding it in her possession. She would have executed this resolution without much pain to herself, and probably without any ill consequence, had Delamain been any other than

the

the man he was; but his temper was at once ſullen and irritable, and his diſpoſition ſtrongly tinctured with jealouſy, at the ſame time that he had the inclination, and more than ſufficient art to conceal it. The artleſs, the inexperienced Honora thought ſhe diſcovered this propenſity; but in fact, though ſhe did happen to gueſs rightly, ſhe had no juſt reaſon for the ſuppoſition, and her diſcovery may therefore be ſtill juſtly eſteemed chimerical.

During the whole evening, which was ſpent at home, and without company, Mr. Delamain's manners were repulſive; and obſerving that his Lady's ſpirits were depreſſed, his converſation conſiſted of a ſeries of inuendoes on the cauſe of her gloom, which he very kindly attributed to her ſullen

ſullen reſentment of his prohibition of her wearing the ring with Oſborne's hair.

At a much earlier hour than uſual, Mr. Delamain propoſed retiring to bed; but Honora ſaid if ſhe did ſo, ſhe ſhould not ſleep the whole night, and declined going to her room for another hour, though ſhe recommended it to her huſband to go, if he was weary of ſitting up. Mrs. Delamain had frequently done preciſely the ſame thing; but on this night it was peculiarly offenſive to him, and he went away muttering his diſcontent. Honora inſtantly put away her work to follow him; but recollecting her purpoſe of reſtoring the hair to its former owner, ſhe thought this would be a good time to perform the buſineſs; and anticipating her triumph when ſhe ſhould tell

Mr.

Mr. Delamain how promptly he had been obeyed, ſhe ſat down to write a letter to Oſborne, which was to accompany the ring.

In the frame of mind that Honora then found herſelf, and with all the imprudence incident to a girl of ſixteen, it may be ſuppoſed that her letter was not preciſely ſo proper as it would probably have been, had Mr. Delamain kindly been the dictator of it; but ſuch as it was, it was that night put into a box with the ring, and given to a ſervant to take to the mail-coach office. Honora then retired to her chamber, impatient to inform her huſband of what ſhe had done; but ſhe found him, as ſhe at firſt thought, faſt aſleep, though afterwards convinced that his ſlumbers were only feigned, to avoid her converſation.

Thus

Thus did mutual diſtruſt, and conſequently mutual unhappineſs, ſteal in between Henry and Honora Delamain. The gentleman perſiſted in that kind of conduct which on that evening ſo much diſtreſſed his Lady, and ſhe, in proceſs of time, loſt all the reſpectful regard ſhe had once borne him; and though within a year after their marriage ſhe preſented him a daughter, it came too late to reſtore any part of that felicity that had flown long before from their abode.

CHAP. X.

THE affair of the ring ſeemed deſtined to prove fatal to the peace and honour of the unhappy Honora, for it introduced a correſpondence with William Oſborne, which proved by no means favourable to her matrimonial duties; and as this little hiſtory of Honora is merely epiſodical, it is needleſs to trace the various degrees of her deſcent from virtue, but ſimply ſay, that it was near ſix years after her marriage that ſhe retired to the cottage (now the abode of Serena), as much to avoid Delamain, whom ſhe

ſhe deteſted, as to enjoy the ſociety of William Oſborne, whom ſhe loved.

Long before Mrs. Delamain left her huſband's houſe, that huſband had been totally indifferent to her; but notwithſtanding this was the caſe, he would not have tamely ſubmitted to be diſgraced, had not his entire neglect of his Lady, combined with her circumſpection in her connection with Oſborne, completely concealed it from his knowledge.

A few months before the period of Mrs. Delamain's retirement, buſineſs of importance had induced Mr. Delamain to go over to Jamaica; and he happened to take his paſſage in the ſame ſhip that alſo conveyed to the Weſt Indies Lieutenant George Hennington

Hennington and his lovely ſiſter, the intereſting Serena.

The hiſtory and circumſtances of theſe young people were ſoon known to Mr. Delamain, and may be thus briefly told.

Their father, the Honourable Mr. Hennington, whoſe circumſtances were far from being affluent, early in life married the daughter of a very poor Earl, with a large portion of beauty, elegance, and goodneſs, but without a ſingle ſhilling to form a proviſion for her, and for her children, when her huſband loſt his life in the memorable action of Still Water.

On a very ſlender income, however, Lady Sophia Hennington contrived to ſupport herſelf

herſelf and Serena (the only one of her children, except George, who reached the third year of their age), and, by her own unwearied aſſiduities, to give her daughter an elegant, as well as uſeful education. For George, who was ten years older than his ſiſter, he was placed in the Navy, and obtained the rank of Lieutenant ſoon after the death of his father, the only favour the long ſervices, and unfortunate deſtiny of that gallant Officer could ever obtain from Government for his family.

When Serena was about ſeventeen, her mother alſo died; and as her penſion, and an annuity her ſon had, by ſaving his prize money, purchaſed for her, died with her, her unfortunate child was obliged to think of ſome means of earning her bread. A

moſt advantageous ſituation, as a governeſs to a family in Jamaica, being held out to her, ſhe accepted of it; and her brother procuring four months' leave of abſence from his ſhip, undertook the voyage with her, in order himſelf to ſee her under the protection of the family ſhe was to live with.

It was during this voyage, which was tedious and uncomfortable, that Mr. Delamain firſt learned to wiſh Honora Seward had never been his wife. Hitherto his indifference towards her (from the firſt ſix weeks of their marriage) had been ſo perfect, that his being married at all ſometimes eſcaped his recollection; but he ſoon felt thoſe ſentiments for the fair orphan as led him to execrate thoſe engagements which forbade him to offer her his hand. Seeing her

her under the protection of her brother, whom he was irresistibly drawn to admire and love, he was well aware that to form any dishonourable plans to procure this lovely girl would be to no purpose whatever; and he despaired of obtaining her, at the very time when chance and love were conspiring to throw her into his arms.

In eleven weeks from the ship leaving England, the voyage terminated. Miss Hennington took possession of her employment in the family of Mr. Harland, at Kingston; and in a few weeks Lieutenant Hennington returned to Europe, having first formed a friendship, he imagined inviolable, with the elegant, the insidious Delamain.

The latter gentleman was not long before he contrived to establish himself as an

intimate with Mr. Harland, to whom, as to every other perſon in the iſland, he was, on his arrival, a total ſtranger. This was done merely with a view of frequently ſeeing the faſcinating Serena, who remained not long in ignorance of the love ſhe had inſpired in his boſom, and was ſo little careful to conceal the innocent predilection ſhe had conceived for him, that Mr. Delamain formed the deteſtable idea of betraying her to ſhame and miſery by marrying, or affecting to marry her. During the whole of her acquaintance with Mr. Delamain, Serena never had the ſlighteſt reaſon to ſuppoſe that he already had a wife; and on his offering the moſt generous propoſals to her, ſhe made not any ſcruple to accept him as a huſband.

Miſs Hennington might, in doing this, be accuſed perhaps of want of affection and confidence in her brother;—but often, even during the voyage from England, had he noted the growing attachment between his ſiſter and his friend; and often, in her preſence, breathed the moſt fervent wiſhes that he might ſome day or other behold them united in marriage.

As ſoon as the mock ceremony had taken place, Serena removed to an elegant houſe, that had been engaged for three years by her perfidious betrayer, who propoſed remaining, for that time at leaſt, in Jamaica, on pretences very different from the real reaſon, which was to guard againſt the diſcovery of his villany, that muſt enſue, if he took Serena to England.

It was in her charming reſidence, within four miles of Kingſton, that the Count de Melanville, whom ſome family affairs had induced to viſit Jamaica, frequently viſited, and learned to admire the beautiful but unfortunate Serena. It was there, too, that he twice met with Sir Piercy Delville, whoſe ſhip took the Jamaica ſtation about a fortnight before he returned to Europe, accompanied by Mr. Delamain, whom buſineſs obliged, much againſt his inclination, to viſit England, whither, for obvious reaſons, he would not permit Serena to accompany him.

During the firſt three months of her ſuppoſed huſband's abſence, Sir Piercy was the frequent viſiter of his lovely countrywoman, at the villa near Kingſton; but after that time

time he almoſt entirely diſcontinued going to her houſe, from a diſcovery he made, that his heart was not proof againſt her beauty, her ſweetneſs, and, above all, the faſcinating charm of her artleſs friendſhip for himſelf.

The fourth month of Mr. Delamain's abſence had nearly elapſed, when Serena, who was always anxious for letters by every opportunity from England, was delighted to receive a packet from an Officer of a man of war, juſt come into Kingſton Roads; but her joy was converted into aſtoniſhment and horror, as ſhe read the following lines:—

"Not from any conſideration of my own violated rights, for they may ſlumber in peace, but to ſerve a being whom I look

upon as every way my ſuperior, I addreſs the much-injured Serena, to inform her of the baſeneſs of him whom ſhe has truſted. At the time when you received the plighted vows of Henry Delamain, you imagined you had ſecured your own felicity, and that of a deſerving lover! But the unworthy Delamain well knew that upwards of five years before, he had led to the altar a girl as innocent as yourſelf; and he alſo knew (for he parted with her only two days before he ſailed for Jamaica) that his wife was living. He now endeavours to procure a divorce from her, but he will find ſuch a meaſure impracticable. Beware, then, how you are again betrayed by his inſidious arts! Culpable myſelf, I ſhould not have dared to arraign another but in the cauſe of injured innocence! I aſk you not to take any thing

on

on truſt! Freely employ the encloſed, and come to England! Surpriſe Delamain, and be convinced of the truth of

"HONORA."

That this letter (which covered bills for two hundred pounds) was written by the real wife of Delamain, will ſcarcely be doubted. Honora had, in fact, in her Yorkſhire retirement, heard of the whole conduct of Mr. Delamain during his abſence from England; and as Oſborne, from whom ſhe procured the intelligence, was well known to Lieutenant Hennington (now in the Eaſt Indies), ſhe, reſolved to ſave Serena from yet deeper deſtruction, by writing to her in the manner we have ſeen;—and on the ſame day ſhe diſpatched another

letter to Mr. Delamain, who, ſhe found from Oſborne, was ſuing for a divorce from herſelf. It was brief, but comprehenſive, and ran thus :—

TO HENRY DELAMAIN, ESQ.

Skipton.

" Mr. Delamain, beware! Whilſt you ſeek to cover others with infamy, you may chance to unveil your own! Relinquiſh at once your preſent plan, and your paſt offences! You cannot prove me more guilty than the world knows I am; but my infant daughter muſt not be diſgraced!— Purſue your preſent deſign of obtaining a divorce from me, and I ſwear, by every thing ſacred, that the whole infamous affair of Serena Hennington ſhall be blazoned to the

the world! By one perſon at leaſt your baſeneſs towards her ſhall be detected. Adieu, and remember my admonitions when you next behold the ſignature of

"HONORA."

After the receipt of Mrs. Delamain's letter, Serena took the firſt opportunity of repairing to England; and immediately on her arrival, haſtened to the apartments of Mr. Delamain in London. It was evening, and he was not at home; but ſhe deſired to await his return in the dining-room. Mr. Delamain's valet, who knew Serena, happened not to be within; and his other ſervant, to whom ſhe was a total ſtranger, ſtared, ſmiled, and conducted her up ſtairs. The mind of Serena was too much occu-

pied by the ſtrangeneſs of her deſtiny, to obſerve the ſneer of the man who admitted her into what ſhe fondly hoped would prove her own houſe; and finding a good fire (for it was yet cold in the evenings), ſhe ſat down near it, after giving a negative to the ſervant's enquiry, if he ſhould bring candles. It was not yet quite dark, but that comfortleſs ſort of light which only ſerves to make every object look gloomy. In vain Serena tried to animate the fire to a cheerful blaze, that ſhould diſpel the ſullen duſkineſs of the large chamber in which ſhe was ſitting; and abandoning her efforts, ſhe began to walk about, merely becauſe her impatience would not ſuffer her to remain quiet. On a table lay Delamain's flute, which ſhe took up. In Jamaica ſhe had ſometimes ſportively attempted to blow it,

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and Delamain had taught her to play two or three ſimple airs: one of theſe was mournfully tender, and ſhe put the inſtrument to her lips, with a deſign of expreſſing the notes; but the very firſt that ſhe ſounded made her relinquiſh the flute, and burſt into tears.—A thouſand fond ideas crowded to her fancy, and repreſented the time when no cruel diſtruſt of Delamain's honour clouded the ſweet expectation of ſeeing him, and ſhe now wept almoſt to agony.

It was at this moment that the well-known ſound of his footſteps, as he aſcended the ſtaircaſe, ſtruck her ears; and forgetting every thing but the impulſe of that affection which made her heart ſpring towards him, ſhe flew to the ſtair-head, where he caught her in his arms. For a few minutes aſtoniſhment

niſhment almoſt ſuſpended the faculties of Mr. Delamain; but his was not a mind long to permit ſuch a ſentiment to deprive him of his powers of diſſimulation; and recollecting the concluding menace of Honora's epiſtle, which he had before not rightly comprehended, he formed an immediate reſolution how to act. The ſurpriſe, which was at firſt real, now became counterfeited; and he, twenty times in a minute, conjured Serena to tell him the cauſe of her ſudden voyage.

Serena, whoſe heart now palpitated between hope and fear, put the letter, which had brought her from her home, into his hands, and faintly begged he would read it; but Delamain, whoſe quick eye diſcovered, with a glance, the hand-writing of his wife

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on the ſuperſcription, would not be prevailed on to open it, till he had ſeated his lovely Serena near the fire; and placing himſelf beſide her, amidſt a thouſand little endearments, important and impreſſive only to the heart which fondly loves, he began to peruſe the lines. Serena watched his countenance with trembling eagerneſs till he had concluded, when he turned his eyes on her; and the firſt frown that ſhe had ever ſeen on the countenance of her adored Henry, was directed towards her.

The triumph of deception was, in a ſhort time, completed. At one moment Mr. Delamain affected to reproach Serena for the want of confidence in his honour, which could alone give to ſuch inſinuations the power to diſturb her repoſe: the next, he vehemently

vehemently thanked her for the tender ſolicitude which would not permit her to leave his juſtification doubtful a moment longer than was neceſſary.

In few words, the artleſs credulity of Serena was no match for the practiſed duplicity of Delamain. She was impoſed on by a feigned tale (the courage of the moment in the prolific brain of the ſeducer), to account for the enmity that had dictated Honora's letter; and it was not till the return of her brother from the Eaſt Indies, five months after her re-union with Mr. Delamain, that the unfortunate Serena diſcovered the double vileneſs of her betrayer, and the treachery to which ſhe had been a victim.

It is probable that the ſame hour which diſcloſed to the gallant George Hennington the infamy of his quondam friend, and the injuries of his ſiſter, would have terminated the exiſtence of her injurer; but a wound, which he had received two years before, incapacitated him from drawing a ſword, or handling a piſtol. His right ſhoulder had been dreadfully ſhattered, and he had been wounded in the ſide. The former obliged him to wear his arm conſtantly in a ſling, and the latter was faſt aiding a pulmonary complaint, to conduct him to a premature grave. But the ſorrows of his beloved ſiſter, for whom he felt an affection almoſt paternal, contributed more than either to produce, within a few weeks after his return to Europe, the death of this amiable and unfortunate young man. He

expired, bequeathing his ſiſter to the care of the noble friend of his adverſity, Sir Piercy Delville, who, by accident, diſcovered his abode, three days before that which rendered Serena deſtitute of any other protection.

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